

EVENING MEMORIES

(EVENING MEMORIES)

WILLIAM O'BRIEN

||

Being a Continuation of
RECOLLECTIONS
by the same Author

MAUNSEL AND CO., LTD.

DUBLIN AND LONDON. 1920

M 1642414

10

B

0138E

BY MOORE
PUBLIC LIBRARY

TO IRELAND,
OLD AND YOUNG

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCES IN "THE HOUSE"	I
II. A THREE YEARS NIGHTMARE	12
III. SURRENDER !	33
IV. THE PARNELL OF THE EIGHTIES	57
V. A BRAVE EXPERIMENT	82
VI. TREMBLING IN THE BALANCE	95
VII. THE FIRST HOME RULE BILL	106
VIII. BACK TO THE WILDERNESS	120
IX. THE CHICAGO CONVENTION	134
X. THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN	153
XI. SUCCESS AND AN UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY	168
XII. A CHRISTMAS NIGHT IN THURLES	191
XIII. A GOVERNMENT OF REVENGE	210
XIV. THE FIRST THUNDERCLAPS	223
XV. TORONTO IN ITS WARPAINT	238
XVI. SOME OTHER CANADIAN NIGHTS	251
XVII. A PERIL WORSE THAN BULLETS	263
XVIII. "REMEMBER MITCHELSTOWN"	274
XIX. "TULLAMORE"	296
XX. A BRACE OF TRAGEDIES	317
XXI. ROME AND IRELAND	337
XXII. AN APPEAL TO CÆSAR	360
XXIII. A BAD LOSER	373
XXIV. "MAKING OF HELL A HEAVEN"	392
XXV. THE PARNELL COMMISSION	402
XXVI. "REALISING THE IDEAL"	419
XXVII. "POPULARITY"	442
XXVIII. AN OLD-FASHIONED ENDING	463
POSTSCRIPTA	474
APPENDIX	505

THE FIGHT FOR IRELAND

"Tell him from me he has done more than any other hundred men to put down three dynasties of Coercionists, and this last is the worst of the three."—*Archbishop CROKE to the Governor of Galway Jail, March 1848.*

NATIONAL UNITY

"I have felt all along that I had no right to expect from anybody but a constant anxiety to meet my views or the intense desire that all proposals claiming your sanction should be as palatable as possible to you, which has so distinguished your conduct of the communication between us. . . . I appreciate intensely the difficulties which have surrounded you in these negotiations, the constant and daily anxiety of which would have been overwhelming to anybody of less courage and devotion than yourself, and I fervently hope and believe that the prospects of Ireland are not as dark as you fear, and that after a little time, having passed through these clouds and darkness, we may once again stand upon our former footing when in happier days we were comrades in arms on behalf of a united Ireland."

—*C. S. PARNELL to O'Brien, February 11, 1881.*

HOME RULE

"It is a serious blot on any scheme that Mr. O'Brien's sacrifices and sufferings for his country's cause should be disregarded. I remember in the year 1890 asking Mr. Gladstone whether he could identify in his mind the crucial moment at which he determined to adopt the policy which made him plunge like Curtius into the gulf that yawned in our British Forum. I can see him now as he paused and thought and then replied: 'Yes; I had been reading a speech of Mr. William O'Brien, and I put it down and said to myself: "what is there in this speech that I must get to realise before I throw it aside?"' And I saw then that there never was and never could be any moral obligation to the Irish race in the Act of Union."—*The HEAD MASTER of Rugby (Mr. Lee Warner) to The Times, October 10, 1913.*

THE ABOLITION OF LANDLORDISM

"I have regretted that the conditions of Irish political controversy precluded me from communicating with you. For I have often wished to express to you personally, and to express in public, my sense of the loyal—I would say, chivalrous—manner in which you stuck by the spirit, as well as the letter, of the agreement between the Classes and Parties on the Land question, *which alone made the Act of 1903 possible.*"—*George WYNDHAM to O'Brien, 14th April, 1908.*

IRISH LITERATURE

"The humour and brightness and the fertility of it are very great, and I can hardly lay the book down. . . . I am finishing William O'Brien's book with delight. It will do immense good; provoke great wrath and great love for Ireland."

—*Cardinal MANNING on WHEN WE WERE BOY.*

EVENING MEMORIES

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCES IN "THE HOUSE" (1883)

By a whimsical coincidence the first acquaintance I made on the day I took my seat in Parliament in 1883 was that of Joseph Chamberlain. While the House was edifying the ungodly by listening to its prayers as the price of reserved tickets for the day, and next, like a troop of escaped schoolboys, breaking into the football-like frolics of "question time," I was left stranded on the cross-bench underneath the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery where new members are left stewing in limbo until they are invited by the Speaker to advance into the seats of the mighty. Immediately behind was the row of privileged visitors' seats "under the Clock," over the barrier of which the athletic Archbishop of Cashel one night later vaulted into the sacred enclosure without going through the formality of presenting a Sheriff's return. My only companion in limbo was Sir Charles Dilke, who was to take his seat on re-election after accepting office in the Gladstone Ministry. Chamberlain, who was to introduce him, crossed over from the Treasury Bench, while "questions" (and answers) were still hurtling through the air, and planted himself between his colleague and myself.

"I am glad to see you here, Mr. O'Brien," he said, cordially extending a hand, and before I could recover from my surprise sufficiently to decide whether shaking the hand of an English Cabinet Minister (even an

ostentatiously friendly one) might not be a first surrender to the wiles of the tempter, my hand was held in a grip that might have been that of one of the vices manufactured by his own eminent firm of Nettlefold.

"My name is Chamberlain," he added, perhaps modestly inferring from my confusion that the explanation was necessary.

"You are very kind," I remarked, blushing with the violence which it still took me some years of wild wars with the whole official world to subdue. "I should have thought you English people would have as little welcome for me as for a dynamite bomb." (It was at the moment when England was horror-stricken by the trials of the Invincibles in Dublin, and when the Chief Secretary had more picturesquely than temperately described the leading articles of my own newspaper as "forming as essential a part of the machinery of assassination as the daggers and the masks.")

"Not a bit of it," was his reply. "An Englishman is a fighter and despises any man who isn't. Ireland will have to send over a good many men like you, if you want to kick John Bull out of his easy chair."

Even in the glow of this friendly greeting in a house of enemies, Chamberlain left me under a first impression of uneasiness, as if in contact with something glittering, sly, even serpent-like. Enormous strength, resolution, masterfulness, a fascination which was not altogether reassuring—all these revealed themselves at a glance. In the well-compacted head, the close-set ears, the neck of a Centaur, the nose cocked up aloft in defiance of all comers, the clean-shaven jaw as hard as though it had been hammered out in his own steel factory, the eyes sharp as gimlets, to which the eye-glass seemed to add a third penetrating power, the alert, sinuous body and swinging arms which seemed always ready to plant some smashing blow, there was

an uncanny suggestion of the guile of the serpent, but still more of the rejoicing vigour of the bruiser, ever keen to meet his man. If the first impression was rather one of ruthlessness than of charm, it was through no lack of friendly prepossession on my part. Chamberlain was then and for some years after, much more than Gladstone, the crescent promise of Parnell and his party. It was his antipathy to coercion—perhaps, also, his gift for candid friendship—that had unhorsed Forster, when the poor man had persuaded himself his policy of “Buckshot” had only to get a further three months’ trial to convert the world to his pathetic faith. In our three-year “fight to a finish” with Lord Spencer and Sir G. Trevelyan, his aid was none the less effective because it took the shape of disheartening our antagonists rather than of openly siding with us. Chamberlain’s famous hint to Parnell: “You can have an Irish Republic, so far as I am concerned, if you will only first help me to dish the Whigs,”¹ was spoken with the undress freedom of the smoke-room of the House of Commons, but was undoubtedly intended to convey his detachment from all the traditional prejudices of Englishmen in their dealings with Ireland. He was entirely in earnest in his public proposal to make Mr. Healy Chief Secretary. I have in my possession a letter to his friend, Mr. W. H. Duignan, of Walsall,² which was widely circulated among the Irish leaders at the time, and in which he declared: “I would not hesitate to transfer entirely to an Irish Board *altogether independent of English Government influence* the consideration and solution” of such organic questions as “the Education question and the Land question and the powers of taxation in Ireland for strictly Irish purposes,” prefacing the proposal with a broad hint that

¹ Meaning Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, who were then the enemy.

² Under date December 17th, 1884.

he was only prevented from going further by the doubt "whether public opinion would *at present* support so great a change." This was, indeed, the first "unauthorised programme" which he proposed to launch by a campaign in Ireland early in 1885 under the joint auspices of himself and of Sir Charles Dilke, whom Parnell always regarded as the more considerable political force of the two. Had the Irish trip been persisted in, the current of events for the succeeding generation might have been changed in a sensational degree, for the better or for the worse. Gladstone might never have been a Home Ruler. Whether wisely or otherwise, we in *United Ireland* took the view that the effect would be to pin the fortunes of Ireland to those of Chamberlain, who, however daring he might be as an ally, could only bring us the adherence of a limited band of fanatical Radicals, while—such are the foibles of the most celestial politicians!—his instalment as the official British Champion of Ireland might have alienated from her service the far vaster genius of Gladstone, already being drawn to us by a thousand subtle currents of semi-Celtic magnetism, but still undecided and uncommitted. The veto of the Nationalists, at all events, involved the instant abandonment of the Irish tour. With characteristic nimbleness, Chamberlain exchanged "the unauthorised programme" which was rejected by Ireland, for the "unauthorised programme" by which he made history that year in Scotland. But he only succeeded in recalling the Old Parliamentary Hand from his yachting tour in the dreamy company of the poet, Tennyson, to reassert his creative vitality by setting out upon the Home Rule crusade himself with all his banners spread and with all the multitudinous forces of his genius in full array. We who took the risks of making our choice between the two men found reason to console ourselves for missing in Ireland the speeches of a sparkling

hetician who was, after all, only an inspired commercial traveller in the English Radical line, when there was produced in the following Session a Home Rule Bill with the thaumaturgic name of Gladstone on the back of it.

Chamberlain, I think, never quite forgave Ireland for the *spretæ injuria formæ*. I know of no other offence on our part that could account for the change from the fearless Minister who was not to be daunted by any amount of ignorant jabber about daggers and dynamite from extending a hand of welcome to a young Irishman only notable because he was cordially hated, to the cankered Unionist politician who, many years after, when there was a heaven-sent chance of peace between the two nations, delivered this final *obiter dictum* to Captain Shawe-Taylor: "The Irish question I regard as I regard my gout. They are both equally detestable and both absolutely incurable." It must never be forgotten, however, that if Chamberlain erred in plotting his Irish tour without consulting Gladstone, Gladstone had his scarcely more tactful vengeance in committing himself to Home Rule without taking his most powerful colleague into his confidence. Nor can we who remember what it was to discern a not altogether unsympathetic eye on the Ministerial Bench, while the hate of an all but unanimous House was hissing in our ears, refuse Chamberlain's memory the justice of recalling that, even in the crisis of his conflict with Gladstone, he offered to let the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill of 1886 go through, if it were to be remodelled on the Home Rule of the Canadian Provinces. "O world! thy lippery turns!" A quarter of a century of Irish disappointments elapsed, Gladstone and Chamberlain were dead, and the Home Rule Act at long last "inscribed on the Statue-book" by an all-potent Home Rule Ministry offered Ireland essentially a Parliament of the same type as that of Quebec or Saskatchewan,

which was rejected when the offer was made by Chamberlain, and—ghastlier irony still—was never to materialise at all until six pounds of flesh nearest to the heart were first cut from the fair body of Ireland. Did the Chamberlain of that day under the Clock see so much further than myself over the ocean of horrors and mutual injustices the two nations were destined to traverse in the same ill-omened ship in which Pitt launched them? I wonder.

The only other Englishman who approached me on the cross-bench was Henry Labouchere. He sniggered at the notion that Chamberlain was a man to be scandalised by a sniff of dynamite. “Joe is a good deal more likely than you to carry a nitro-glycerine cartridge up his sleeve. But it’s only intended to be exploded under the coat-tails of his friends.” Labouchere himself, before I had seen him, we regarded as our trustiest of allies among Englishmen, and that because centuries of naturalisation could not flatten him into an Englishman. The mobility, springiness, and delicacy of his figure might have suggested the graces of a dancing master, if they did not still better suggest the sprightliness of a French *piou-piou* on the march. And again, it must be owned, there was that in his grimace which needed but a daub of red paint on the cheek, and a pair of baggy white breeches, with his hands in the pockets, to equip him to set a circus in a roar. His was the clarity of thought, the turn for scintillating epigram of the finest French models, but his was also an incurable addiction to *persiflage* such as it used to be the English fashion to consider as inseparable from the Frenchman as the hair of a scrubbing brush, or the flat rim of his *haut-de-forme*. (England has since discovered with a comic amazement that the France of Foch is not quite the France of Béranger’s Lisette.) In the words of a witty Irish judge, “Labby went dam near being a man of genius.” The fact that friends and foes combined to

call him Labby ought to have been sufficient to explain to him why Gladstone refused to take him more seriously than he took himself, when the refusal to him of high office in the Ministry of 1893 once for all banished this exquisitely (in the French sense) malicious scoffer to his cloister of Thélème in his Florentine villa.

But by an Irishman, at least, his instinctive siding with the underdog, his wholly sincere tenderness for human weakness and pain, his chafing under the eternal mystery of the world's misery, will not be forgotten, while the circumstance that it was his wit that disabled him in a dull Puritan world for greatness will be readily condoned. No cloud of winter showers ever drove him from the Irish cause. In years when the mention of Home Rule at a London dinner-table would have been nothing less than a shocking solecism in "Society," Labouchere performed the miracle of making *Truth* a tremendous financial success as a fashionable Gazette, while it weekly preached the most extreme views of the Parnellites with an effrontery which took away the breath of the fine ladies and choleric club snobs who took it in. Everything was forgiven to a style that cut like a diamond and a *bondiablerie* that never lost its knack of amusing. Not that he was not able to mock at the funny side of Irish affairs, as well as at the pomposity of their English critics. One night a youthful colleague of ours, by whose grave England is now ready enough to drop a tear, was addressing the Saxon in one of youth's fine frenzies, theatrically thrusting his fingers through his chestnut hair while he roared out the prophecy that "the Cossacks of Russia would yet stable their horses in the House of Commons." The Saxon, most of whom had profusely dined, were expressing their alarm at the prospect with yells of laughter. Labouchere sidled up to me with the pained remark: "What sort of young man is this new Mr. —"

you've sent over to us? It isn't that he's against law and order—we're all against law and order—but, you know, he's such a blawsted awss!" To himself every audacity was permitted by a House which is never ungrateful to those who brighten its boredom. I remember his once diversifying a speech on the Budget by turning to an Under Secretary, who combined a large general grocery trade with statesmanship and addressing to him the unexpected query: "If you add this tuppence in the pound, I ask my right hon. friend what will he be able to do me a good sound tea for?" It was peradventure some obscure suggestion of atavism that made him end his days among foreigners less foreign than those who would have forgiven him any disqualification for office but a pretty wit. Many years later, I found the British Colony in Florence in high dudgeon at Labby's resolute refusals of cards to his own nationals for his fairy fetes at the Villa Margherita. The conjecture may not be altogether a wild one that his bones rest more at home in the cemetery where San Miniato looks down over the all-golden sunsets towards Pisa, than if respectably tucked away in some post-mortem dwelling-place of the British Philistines.

My "maiden speech" came off a few days afterwards under every condition that could for ever blight the ambition of a newcomer with any respect for English opinion. The occasion arose quite unexpectedly in the debate. The air was black with the revelations in Dublin at the trials of the band of desperadoes, styling themselves the Invincibles, who had murdered the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary in the Phoenix Park. The principal villain of the piece was a member of the Dublin Corporation, James Carey, who had added to the infamy of his bloody part in the conspiracy the still deeper damnation of turning informer upon his younger dupes in a paroxysm of terror for his own vile carcase. It was

in a crisis of hungry anti-Irish fury such as this, I was called upon to answer the charge, just then disclosed by the evidence in Dublin, that I had been a sponsor of this atrocious villain in his candidature for the Corporation. To the speechless horror of my listeners I acknowledged that I had published a letter of recommendation in Carey's favour in *United Ireland*, and that, in the same circumstances, I should feel it a duty to do it again. The prosaic truth was that I had never in my life seen Carey, nor so much as heard of his existence until he became a Labour candidate for the ward of which I was a burgess, in days when a Labour Member was a more astonishing portent on the benches of the Dublin Corporation than he would be now in a Prime Minister's seat, and I said my word of good cheer for him as well as for a good many more in *United Ireland* with no more suspicion that the ward politician had carried a knife in the Phoenix Park than that he had written a great epic poem. But what were base actualities like these to a House who could see nothing but red blood, wherever they turned their eyes in Ireland, and who, indeed, quite honestly and fanatically believed that some fresh disclosure in Dublin by the informer might any day bring about the exit of Parnell and his pestilent Party through the trap-door of a gallows? A friendly Minister (this time not Chamberlain) actually conveyed to two of us a short time afterwards an intimation that no obstacle would be placed in the way of our flight to the Continent in view of further revelations impending—a hint which was hailed by his ungrateful beneficiaries with a roar of laughter, in our little *coenaculum* in the lower smoke-room. The wise men had discovered as a truth too clear to be argued against that the Phoenix Park murders which felled Parnell into the dust, bleeding and all but out of his wits, just as he had vanquished Forster and converted Gladstone, were in reality a piece of deep-drawn devilry of his own contrivance!

But was ever maiden speech made under less cheerful auspices? To my horror-stricken audience, at least; for to the Irish member of those days there was always a fierce joy in stirring up the wrath and horror of the ignorant, cruel and self-righteous mob who were capable of imagining against the representatives of a nation the abominable injustices they scarcely dared give voice to except in animal growls? For ourselves, the more the heathen raged, the better was the day's work for Ireland. The blameless Scottish baronet (Sir Herbert Maxwell) who replied to me did so with a comic solemnity which almost rendered him speechless—the solemnity of a respectable father of a family who had just heard me avow in cold blood that I had murdered my grandmother and had buried the remains in the back garden. Few have had the experience of a more unanimously “bad Press” than I had the opportunity of perusing the next day upon every note of brutality, hatred, and contempt. Then also commenced a series of anonymous threatening letters which continued for many months to come from a variety of worthy English lunatics, menacing me in terms of irrelevant obscenity with every penalty from a horsewhipping to bloody murder. The most considerable success of the writers was their ingenuity in leaving their letters unstamped and compelling my greenhorn self to pay double postage on them. Even this little comfort, however, was soon cut off from them by the excellent postmaster in the Lobby who used to hold up a packet of the unstamped missives to me with a grin, as he remarked: “They are only some more of those cracked threatening letters, Mr. O'Brien,” and cast into the waste-paper basket a mass of sanguinary literature which in the hands of a practised Dublin Castle official would have sufficed for the indictment of a nation.

There were compensations, however. As, for

instance, Parnell's smiling compliment : " My dear O'Brien, you plunged into the lions' den like a Daniel ! " and it was the verdict of one who had fought the beasts at Ephesus himself with an icy intrepidity in which he had no rival. Another was more touching still. The next day, as I was crossing the street from Palace Yard to Whitehall, a gigantic Irish policeman, a townsman of my own, stopped the tremendous tide of traffic to let me pass, and drawing himself up to his magnificent height with a grand salute growled out " God bless you ! " to the bewilderment of the double line of drivers he had held up, who were doubtless puzzling to know who the personage was to whom they were compelled to do public homage, and had they known, would have willingly united in lynching. It is a small matter, and yet it is of the essence of a mystic strength in the Irish cause which the wrath of all the lawgivers of England and the guns of all her armies can never cope withal.

CHAPTER II

A THREE YEARS' NIGHTMARE (1882-1885)

The three years between the Phoenix Park murders in 1882 and Earl Spencer's surrender of the Viceroyalty in 1885 witnessed an agony of body and mind in their resistance against desperate odds such as the half-a-dozen men who underwent it cannot even yet recall without a shudder in the watches of the night. They were young and "their sleep fell soft on the hardest bed," or they should never have lived to emerge in golden clouds of victory from the Inferno.

The living are beginning to lose sight of the forlorn outlook, and History has not yet arrived to reconstitute it, when Forster's jails having been triumphantly thrown open to his prisoners and Gladstone won over to strew their way with the rosy petals of a policy of concession differing in nothing except in name from Home Rule, the entire edifice of our hard-won success was tumbled about our ears one sweet afternoon in May by a trio of half-witted desperadoes who did not even know until they read it in the paper the next morning that it was the new Chief Secretary, the angel of good tidings, they had murdered. What a labour of Hercules to begin building up all over again from the bottom, and what a handful of raw Irish gorsoons to affront the task! Parnell himself avowed that as long as the new Coercion Act should remain in force, public life in Ireland had been made for him impossible. He bade God-speed to the young enthusiasts who refused to quit the breach *quand même*, with the

same pang—half sorrow, and half pride—with which a commander sees his forlorn hope charging forth to their doom. Not uncommonly in the Irish battle, one particular county or district does a disproportionate amount of the fighting, then falls asleep and only reawakens ten or fifteen years afterwards. It so happened now again. Mayo, which bore the major part of the burden during the fierce though incredibly short life of the Land League, retained not a vestige of the Land League organisation for many years after its suppression in 1881. Those who figured most largely on its early platforms—Davitt, Tom Brennan, Harold Rylett, Boyton, Dillon, Sheridan, Daly, and the Walshes of Balla and of Castlebar for all practical purposes disappeared from the fighting front altogether. Michael Davitt—ever liable to an occasional lovable rebellion against the realism of earthy politics—allowed himself to be carried off in the train of Henry George's apostleship of the Nationalisation of the Land, until Parnell was forced to take public issue with him, and in a single speech in Drogheda dismissed the Georgian evangel from the practical affairs of Ireland. Mr. Dillon had retired to the ranche of a relative in Colorado in despair, and only came back three years afterwards with the bonfires for our victory. There was no help to be expected from the House of Commons. Only twenty-eight "Home Rule" members gave a vote against the Coercion Bill that tore "the Kilmainham Treaty" to shreds and began a new war of extermination against Irish Nationality. Mr. Healy summed up the situation when, turning upon the Coercionists yelling around him, he cried: "I had as lief try to reason with a pack of Zulus. Come on with your assegais as soon as you like!"

But the outlook at home was scarcely less depressing. "The Land League" has come to be popularly accepted as the incarnation of Ireland's resistance for

a quarter of a century. The reality of the case was far otherwise. The Land League had only a bare twelvemonths' existence when it was suppressed by a proclamation following the No Rent Manifesto in the winter of 1881 and was never afterwards revived. The country was exhausted by the sacrifices of the first volcanic upheaval against coercion and famine. Even after the National League was timorously founded under the naked sword of the new Coercion Act, there were few who risked making speeches to its meetings, and, indeed, the meetings were few and frightened which could be got to listen to them. Lord Spencer's Government availed themselves of the country's abasement to deepen the terror by exacting a fearful vengeance for the murders of the preceding years; scouring the country for suspects; manufacturing a hideous race of informers by offering rewards of thousands of pounds for evidence, regardless of its character; trying the victims of the *delatores* by ruthlessly packed juries of "loyal Protestants" in Dublin; "convicting them by hook or crook" (in the words of one of their delirious organs in the Press); hanging dozens of them despite their clamorous protestations of innocence on the very scaffold; and sentencing the High Sheriff of Dublin (Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray, M.P.) to six months imprisonment and a fine of £500 for exposing the drunken orgie in which one of the packed "loyal Protestant juries" spent the night before they sent one of their young victims to the scaffold.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor once described the struggle which began with the utter prostration of the National movement and ended with the overthrow of Earl Spencer, as "a long and lonely duel" between that intrepid Viceroy and myself. Substituting *United Ireland* for my own then unfamiliar personality, the description is not an untrue one. The paper was literally a weekly insurrection in print. To its columns

as behind the barricades gathered all the stormy passion, all the insuppressible resolve of a country panting to escape from its galling chains. Why its machinery was not broken up and its conductors hustled into penal servitude as promptly as Lord Clarendon dealt with John Mitchel was to ourselves a source of wonder from week to week. The answer was most likely to be found in the cry of the Trojan in his burning city—*Una spes victis nullam sperare salutem*—our one hope of safety was that Dublin Castle was aware that safety was the last thing we hoped for. As between those who undertook to dragoon Ireland out of her ideals and ourselves, we gave no quarter and we expected none. Possibly the recollection of the Castle Law Advisers was still fresh of Forster's frantic six months battle for the extermination of *United Ireland*—when its offices were pillaged, its editor, sub-editors, compositors, clerks, and printer's devils were scattered in half-a-dozen Irish jails, and none the less the offending sheet reappeared in this town or that—for a good many weeks, in two or three different towns and different editions together—now in Belfast or Cork, now in Liverpool or London, or in Paris, and the whole editing done all the time from the unfortunate Chief Secretary's own grim jail of Kilmainham—when the haughty Government of England had its police forces engaged in chasing ragged newsboys through the streets of Dublin and breaking open commercial travellers' cases and milliners' bandboxes at every railway station for consignments of the ubiquitous and invisible journal and mustering cohorts of detectives at Dover and Folkestone and Newhaven for the arrival of the French boats, and actually commissioning a gunboat to cruise off Kinsale on the chance that the French fishing boats might smuggle in parcels of the Paris edition.

The grave Red Earl might well shrink from

THE
LIBRARY

1854

recommencing a form of warfare in which his dignity was sure to be the worst sufferer. He chose more grandiose methods and instituted a State prosecution for Seditious Libel. I was obliged to sandwich my visits to Mallow in the famous election contest against Mr. Naish, the Law Adviser, with attendance at the bar in the Courthouse at Green Street, (where Robert Emmet uttered his last words), to answer an indictment the upshot of which might well have seemed settled, the moment the jury was sworn. For "the seditious libel" being a charge of befouling the course of justice by shameless jury-packing, we were treated to a handsome illustration of the very process charged against the Crown, when Catholic and Nationalist jurors were ordered to "Stand by" by the practitioner subsequently known to fame as "Pether the Packer," and a jury composed in overwhelming numbers of "loyal Protestants" was wirepulled before my face "to convict me by hook or crook" for hinting that such infamies were possible.

A shady transaction enough, but still not altogether unforgivable. For the prosecution in Green Street doubled the majority in Mallow which broke for ever the power of Dublin Castle to corrupt the Irish boroughs. Better still, the Crown selected for prosecution an article arraigning in specific particulars the entire system of white terrorism by which the Phoenix Park murders were avenged. It was the Terrorists themselves who really stood in the dock for judgment, and in their own Court by their own packed tribunal they were confounded. Furthermore, the trial shattered the last defence of the jury-packers for the selection of Protestants and the exclusion of Catholics; for one of the two Catholics admitted among the twelve held out fanatically for a conviction while one of the ten "loyal Protestants" (the late Alderman Gregg) was so horrified by the proven justification of the worst charges in *United Ireland* that it was he who

BY BOOKS

YARRELL 1884

really baulked the Crown Prosecutors of their prey, and he left the jury box (as the Lord Lieutenant left Ireland two years afterwards) a steadfast Home Ruler for the remainder of his life.

Thus far, there was still some tolerable show of "playing the game"—the game being one of life or death between an established Government and a newspaper in open insurrection. The facts now to be related disclose a case of murderous foul play as between a powerful State and a subject than which—I believed intensely then, and am still more deliberately persuaded now—nothing worse is to be found in human annals since the times when the instruments of Government were the dagger and the bowl. On the 25th August, 1883, as the concluding words of an article in *United Ireland* replying to the *Freeman* on a different question—*viz.*, the deportment of Irish members in the House of Commons—there occurred the following sentence: "If the House of Commons wants to make rules to stop such questions as Mr. Healy's, it is open to it to devote its valuable time to the attempt, but it will not do so until the life and adventures, and what is called the 'private character' of various Crown Employees in Ireland from Corry Connellan to Detective Director and County Inspector James Ellis French are fully laid bare to the universe."

That one sentence and nothing more. Our editorial work had usually to be rushed through at a red heat in the small hours before the day of publication, and this particular article, which was written by Mr. Healy, had escaped my supervision. Had it been otherwise, the sentence specified would have conveyed no definite meaning to me. It was, I think, the first time the name of James Ellis French had come to my ears; as it happened, I never beheld him either before or afterwards. Corry Connellan I remembered chiefly as the Under Secretary celebrated in Thackeray's comic ballad of "The Shannon Shore," and had never heard

of otherwise save through some vague echo of the *chroniques scandaleuses* of the Dublin society of the second last generation. The above was the one casual sentence on the strength of which Dublin Castle formed and carried on for several years a conspiracy, which is not too strongly characterised as a loathsome one, for the destruction of *United Ireland* and myself, after open violence, and the resources of a packed Bench and a packed Jury had failed them. A darker villainy still, that destruction was to be compassed by shielding the crimes of high officials in Dublin Castle's own service on condition of their throwing upon a private individual the apparently impossible task of bringing these crimes home to them. Words that may well shock gentle minds : let us see whether the accusation be overcharged.

A week or two after the publication, I received a writ for £5,000 damages for libel at the suit of James Ellis French, Detective Director and County Inspector, and it was announced at the same time in the papers that the plaintiff had been suspended from duty by his superiors in Dublin Castle. It was then I first inquired of Mr. Healy the meaning of the allusion in the leading article, and learned both the certainty of French's guilt and the still deeper guilt of the great officers of State who had deliberately called him in to insist that he should make the defence of his white soul the means for crushing the insurgent newspaper under a mountain of public odium as well as financial ruin. Mr. Healy's informant was a District Inspector of Constabulary at Charleville, and there could be no rational doubt that his information was well founded. It was the common gossip of the Castle underworld and of the officers' headquarters at the Constabulary Depot. Nay, the scandal was so notorious to the supreme authorities of Dublin Castle themselves that, long before the allusion in *United Ireland*, they had set an investigation going with a

view to bringing the criminal to justice. A number of youthful District Inspectors and Cadets had been summoned to the Castle and with whatever reluctance made any further doubt impossible by their revelations ; matters were in this posture when the solitary compromising sentence in *United Ireland* changed the half-convicted criminal into the protagonist of Dublin Castle against a hated foe. French was informed that he would be summarily dismissed unless he brought an action for libel against *United Ireland*, and to make the threat the more effective he was suspended from duty until he had successfully prosecuted his suit. In the meantime the official investigation was dropped by those who alone could have induced the witnesses of his guilt to break silence, and the burden was thrown upon those who (it was calculated) must absolutely fail to do so. In any event, whether Cassio killed Roderigo, or Roderigo killed Cassio, or each did kill the other, the Dublin Castle Iagos would have their consolations.

Earl Spencer, as it turned out, had the probity of a Stoic and the greatness of a Statesman ; his Chief Secretary, Mr. Trevelyan, had the charm of a cultured gentleman. It is now clear enough that their profound ignorance of Irish affairs was imposed upon by the mad ex-Indian officers, roguish lawyers, and scurvy *agens provocateurs* who had control of the machinery of Law and Justice in Dublin Castle. It is only the completeness of their trust in their villainous subordinates that can account for the historic amends they made to Ireland for their error as soon as the awakening came. But to those still more ignorant English censors who raised their scandalised eyes to Heaven because the victims of the Castle conspiracy did not know Earl Spencer better than they knew us, and did not receive with an angelic resignation the poisoned weapons levelled at our lives, and at something dearer still, it is sufficient to reply that his was the constitu-

tional responsibility for the monsters covered by his State Mantle, and that it was not until their machinations were finally and by a process little short of the miraculous overthrown that their official hierarchs made any reparation for the long agony of injustice through which their political opponents had been forced to pass.

For what followed ? The young officers, who were communicative enough when interrogated at the Castle, naturally refused to open their lips to the Castle's enemies the moment they felt assured they would be thus freeing themselves from any further inquisition on the odious subject ; for if *United Ireland* failed to prove French's guilt, obviously he was safe for ever from any impeachment on the part of the government that had instigated his action. When District Inspector Murphy appealed to them for a corroboration of the communications they had been freely making to him, their lips were sealed. The District Inspector himself was shifted from station to station and harried with a thousand ingenious torments from headquarters, and before many months were over was dismissed from his office upon a charge which was in substance that of endeavouring to relieve the Irish police force from a horrid cancer. A confidential agent recommended by a distinguished Irishman in London had no sooner begun to watch the Detective Director's movements than he was set upon at night with revolvers by two of French's minions, whom he had promoted to Head Constableships over the heads of men of a maturer age, was hauled off to a police-station, where no charge was entered against him, and threatened with a prosecution for felony unless he consented immediately to quit Dublin. This the unfortunate Englishman precipately did. We were left without a particle of producible evidence. Had the Detective Director unflinchingly pressed his action to a trial, it is certain he must have obtained an

uncontested verdict, and one of the most abominable miscarriages of public justice ever plotted must have been triumphantly consummated, with the connivance of Dublin Castle, and indeed at their command.

Providentially the cowardice of persons thus diseased is commonly as abject as their depravity. The daring with which *United Ireland* took up the challenge and pressed him week after week to come on filled French with the suspicion that some of the evidences of what had now come to be known as a widespread network of iniquity must have reached our hands. He hesitated, and hesitated all the more the oftener our defiance was repeated. There was an ominous delay about serving the statement of claim. We pursued the advantage by moving to dismiss the action for want of prosecution. The wretched creature could only muster courage to respond with a plea of illness. Here again his official shelterers, who had forced him into the action, incurred a fresh responsibility on behalf of their guilty accomplice in frustrating public justice. Knowing, as the most obtuse of them must now have known, that he shrank from following up his reluctant writ, their obvious duty was to expose the notoriously false pretext of illness, dismiss him from the public service, and themselves put him upon his trial upon proofs which were abundantly within their own procurement, although they must have been aware that these proofs had been with one consent denied to us. They, quite otherwise, winked at the impostor's plea of illness, supported it with official medical certificates, gave French unlimited leave of absence to bury himself in the country month after month, enabled him, in fact, to pose as the stricken victim of our cruel calumnies, and to defeat our repeated applications to the High Court to dismiss his bogus action.

But retribution was now about to strike at the Castle conspirators a mortal blow. While we were still in

the state of suspense in which moral certainty gave little peace of mind in the absence of a scrap of legal evidence, dealing as we were with enemies who knew no scruple, and no limits to their power, our last resource was to bring over to Dublin, on the advice of the late Sir George Lewis, a private inquiry agent named Micklejohn, who as an old detective officer in the service of Scotland Yard, had explored the lowest depths of vice and crime and was familiar with all their scabrous secrets. This man, who with the unerring instinct of the bloodhound possessed an uncanny magnetism all his own for criminals once wincing under his eye, and withal an unpurchaseable fidelity to his employers, such as would have entitled him to an immortal niche among the heroes of the author of *Sherlock Holmes*, had not been a fortnight in Dublin before he got into his hands the clues of a criminal confederacy which, for its extent and atrocity, almost staggered belief. It included men of all ranks, classes, professions, and outlawries, from aristocrats of the highest fashion to outcasts in the most loathsome dens. The discovery of this leprosy prescribed for us a duty which was not to be shirked. It was to save society from its perfidious official guardians, even if our risks—awful enough already—had to be doubled in the adventure.

We made a final attempt to rout French from his lair by moving the Queen's Bench anew to dismiss the action, which had now been on the files of the Court for ten months without going a step further than (after four months) lodgment of a formal statement of claim. Four Judges of the Court of Queen's Bench even then refused the application and postponed the final miserable shipwreck of the Detective Director for a further month, grounding themselves upon medical reports of certain pranks simulating insanity, which upon the fellow's subsequent trial and conviction were proved to be transparent stage play. In lashing this

conspiracy of procrastination with a sufficient vigour, *United Ireland* mentioned a new name, that of Mr. Gustavus C. Cornwall, Secretary of the General Post Office, an influential figure in the Dublin Castle society of the time. Untaught by their lesson in the French case, and overwhelmed as they must now have been, even more than ourselves, with proofs of the reality of the abominable cult whose high priests they were quite certainly, if not wilfully, aiding to evade justice, the Castle Executive compelled Cornwall, as they had compelled the head of the Criminal Investigation Department, to serve me on May 24th, 1884, with a new writ for libel, the damages being laid at £10,000. This time they had hit upon a champion more doughty than the grovelling Detective Inspector. Cornwall was an aristocrat of quite a ducal presence and with nerves of steel, and he pressed on the trial with the haughty confidence of one who felt that the witnesses whose silence the Government could have without difficulty broken down could have no conceivable motive for destroying themselves to oblige the Government's enemies.

As though official terrorism was not even yet sufficiently armed, the Castle unloosed a third and the most formidable bloodhound of all its pack on the trail of the detested journal. And that upon a pretext even more false-hearted than its concern for the innocence of the Detective Director. Mr. George Bolton, the Treasury Crown Solicitor, was a more important personage in the administration of justice in Ireland than the head of the Criminal Investigation Department himself, for he was French's hierarchical superior, as well as a man of immeasurably greater craft and daring. It was Bolton, a veteran official of unreverent grey hairs and too hardy a cynic to disavow the abandoned character of his private life, who had directed the entire campaign of bloody reprisals for the Phoenix Park murders. It was he who scoured

the jails for the evidence of murderers and tempted them to become informers by lavish pecuniary rewards, who placed a black mark against the names of the proscribed Catholics on the jury-panel for Mr. Peter O'Brien's instruction, and securely packed the special juries whose verdicts drew a tragic chorus of cries of innocence from the scaffolds. We may pretty safely guess that it was to him also was originally due the ingenious device of strangling *United Ireland* through the instrumentality of French. This was the Sir Galahad of outraged virtue who now with a gesture of contempt for his collapsed colleague advanced to save the situation himself with a more cunning grievance and a steadier nerve.

It happened in this way. The growing revolt against the misgovernment of Ireland by officials of the type just indicated made it necessary to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the system under which the law was administered by uninformed Englishmen blinded and dominated by such subordinates. A pedantic Clerk at the Table refused to receive my notice of motion unless it specified the officials incriminated by name. In spite of my protest that this mode of procedure would restrict me to a small number out of a painfully lengthy list of Castle bureaucrats undesirable in all sorts of different ways I was compelled to name French, Cornwall, and Bolton, as the three most responsible at the moment for the enormities of Castle maladministration. The collocation of the three names was not of my choice, but was dictated by the Clerk at the Table, and the notice of Motion contained no hint that the accusation against the three was identical, as it notoriously was not, to the knowledge of every reader of *United Ireland*. A slipshod sub-editor, however, published the Notice of Motion under a sub-heading, "A Precious Trio," which was not, of course, covered by Parliamentary privilege, and the slim Mr. George Bolton promptly

pounced upon the sub-heading as charging him with the particular form of guilt in respect of which the two previous actions for libel had been instituted against *United Ireland*, and he launched writs for no less than £30,000 damages to vindicate himself from almost the only description of iniquity which nobody had dreamt of imputing to him. Inhuman baseness to his wife, heartless swindling, subornation of perjury—all these things *United Ireland* had charged against him time and again in his character as the principal secret manipulator of the criminal law in Ireland, and it had never occurred to him to dispute the indictment. But here was the lucky technicality which enabled him to take to himself an accusation of the one monstrosity as to which he could exhibit a clean bill of health, and lo! the Chief Crown Solicitor plunged into the fray against *United Ireland* to claim a princely indemnity in the name of his snow-white innocence! By a new stroke of genius, he laid the venue in Belfast, which was equivalent to laying the venue against an early Christian in the Colosseum. One obsequious Court refused with scorn our application to change the venue. The Court of Common Plea fined me £500 for “contempt of court” for an article in which I twitted the sensitive Mr. Bolton with imputing to himself the only sin in the calendar of which *United Ireland* had never dreamed of suspecting him, while resolutely declining to read the list of heinous crimes with which he was really charged and which I ventured to re-enumerate for his information in all their native deformity.

The third and craftiest of all the Castle sleuth-hounds had been unleashed. *United Ireland* was summoned to answer for a total indemnity of £70,500 to be fixed in Courts of the Castle’s naming, with witnesses of necessity confined to the Castle’s own instruments, and Castledom throughout all the kennels of its ferocious power was already yelling its blood-

thirst over the carcase of the unfortunate newspaper delivered to its fangs.

Cornwall and Bolton pressed ahead with their actions at lightning speed. Our evidence of Cornwall's guilt was overwhelming. The only anxiety—but it was a torturing one—was whether our witnesses could be induced to speak? That they ever did so remains a riddle for the answer to which psychology will search in vain. They were young men of high social pretensions, two of them of considerable wealth. Their environment, racial, religious, political, and social, inspired them with every conceivable motive for antipathy to us and for alliance with our assailants. There was no legal compulsion on them to avow a story which must cover them with inexpiable shame. There was on the contrary—and it is the heaviest count in the arraignment of the responsible administrators of public justice—something not easily distinguishable from encouragement to them to aid in hushing it up. Even after the despicable Detective Director had foundered in his attempts to seek the shelter of a lunatic asylum from a prosecution of the action, into which the Castle had goaded him, neither the Lord Lieutenant nor the Chief Secretary had given any sign of realising of what a devastating public scandal they were being made the unconscious apologists. While the Cornwall trial was still pending and our doubts daily thickening as to whether the witnesses could ever be got to face the ordeal of verifying in the witness-chair their written depositions to our solicitors, the infatuated Chief Secretary, in a fit of violent hysterics in the House of Commons, denounced me to their fury on the atrocious charge of “employing a scoundrel to go over to Dublin to trump up infamous charges against innocent men.” So exultant was the confidence in Castle circles that rumours began to circulate around the Library fire at the Four Courts that the action was bound to eventuate in prosecutions

for criminal conspiracy, and sentences of penal servitude, not for the Cornwall confederacy, but for those who had striven in the teeth of all the powers and dominations of Dublin Castle to drag the truth to light.

For a month the four principal witnesses had been staying together at a Dover hotel, awaiting the trial. There was nothing to prevent them, the morning they read the Chief Secretary's speech or any other morning, from boarding the boat for Calais, and freeing themselves in two hours from every risk of exposure. One of them, a military officer, did cross to France, and was not heard of again. We expected every day's post to bring the tidings that the rest had followed. Why they did not do so remains to this day an inscrutable puzzle, save so far as the mixture of timidity, frivolity and incredible vanity in their abnormal temperament may have paralysed their will power. Even the stoutest of my own friends began to tremble for the issue of a battle in which all the public could discern was one man standing singlehanded against unnumbered powers of darkness. The experience was all the more abhorrent because the subject could not be approached without embarrassing circumlocutions even in consultations with our own case-hardened lawyers and in the conversations of the ordinary man in the street could not be approached at all. When public curiosity was roused to fever pitch by the astounding drama of the trial *United Ireland* contented itself with the publication of the verdict for its vindication and suppressed the details of question and answer with which the columns of the daily newspapers were reeking.

Looking back now upon the interminable months of suspense while I walked, like Bunyan's Pilgrim in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, between fathomless abysses of ruin and horror, I should be as much amazed as were the general public at my own apparent

fortitude did I not know that my strength sprang from the mere recklessness of one to whom life was a mystery of immeasurable sadness ; who had lost every near relative the human heart could cling to ; whose only home was a back bedroom on the top floor of a Dublin hotel ; who—although with an unconquerable cheerfulness towards others—had come to regard the world not as an inn to live in, but a prison to suffer and die in, and wondered much why men should have any but a smiling face for death, provided only it brought with it “the garland of wild olive” of an inspiring cause and was sweetened with the happy warrior’s consciousness of answering back resounding blow with blow to the last. After all, if the fate of an individual Irishman was being weighed in the one scale, the fortunes of a great Government, as between coercion and liberty for our nation, were trembling in the opposite one.

The test came at last in the early days of July 1884. The unwholesome Nisi Prius Court was half choked with an audience little less unwholesome, composed mostly—thanks to the police precautions—of place-hunting barristers and Castle parasites, assembled to “see the gladiator die.” By whatever adroit coincidence, the Judge secured for the occasion was my homonym, Mr. Justice William O’Brien, whose rejection at the Ennis Election had changed the blood of an effusive friend into the gall of an all too zealous renegade, and who awaited with a morose delectation the first decent pretext for turning down his thumbs. It did not seem as if his Lordship would have to wait long. When Cornwall presented himself in the witness-box, it was rather to pontificate than to make the excuses of a criminal. A man of imposing stature, of a dignity that did not deign to argue and of an iron nerve, he delivered his answers with a majesty that seemed to fascinate the Court, and might well have overawed any cross-examiner less ironclad than my

leading Counsel, Mr. Serjeant Boyd. Fearless and merciless the cross-examination was ; it was no longer possible to play the pontiff in face of semi-confessions that painfully misbeseemed the robes of righteousness in which the grey-haired witness had arrayed himself. But shameful half-avowals were not proofs, and he left the witness-chair without a break in the superb chain of his perjuries.

Boyd was not the man to be daunted. Strong in the knowledge of the overwhelming mass of evidence with which his brief was bursting, he flamed out into a red-hot denunciation of the imposture that had just been played off upon the Court. By the time his speech was finished, he had completely turned the tables and had his audience panting with impatience to hear the proofs he promised to shower upon them. As he sat down, there was an uneasy susurrus among my lawyers. My solicitor had squeezed his way into Court and communicated a message which made the faces of those rugged men of law white and sick. One of them passed me over a slip of paper on which he had written with a trembling hand : " Our witnesses refuse to appear."

A mysterious instinct, that there was something wrong, electrified the Court. There was first a silence of death and then a buzz like the breathing of some many-headed wild animal. One of my counsel, who was himself visibly shivering with emotion, remarked to me with wonder later that day : " You were the only man in the Court with a cheerful face." The truth was that, in the course of a life in which danger has taken forms of which revolver shots and bayonet charges were not by any means the worst, there was never before or since a moment when terror filled my soul with such a vision of ruin instant and inevitable, of a horrid human injustice, never to be repaired, never even to be made known. If I kept a serene face under the battery of cruel eyes directed

upon me, so long as there was still a hope of rallying our wavering ranks, it was the serenity of one stretched upon a mediaeval rack after the pulleys and thumb-screws had done their worst.

There was a moment's agitated consultation among counsel. To gain a few minutes' respite they called an expert in handwriting as our first witness. A sort of incredulous inattention pervaded the audience. The breathing of the wild animal recommenced. Nobody was listening to the witness.

"Come, Serjeant Boyd," growled the Judge, squaring himself into an attitude strangely compounded of anger and exultation. "Come, Serjeant Boyd, this is not the sort of evidence we have a right to expect from your client!"

Boyd, stubborn Orangeman that he was, answered the bully in his own coin: "My Lord, it is not you, it is I, who am entrusted with the interests of my client. I will conduct the case in my own way and call my own witnesses."

"You will have to pay respect to the Court, Sir!" was thundered from the Bench.

"I will pay as much respect to the Court as the Court deserves—not a tittle more!" retorted the Serjeant in no less thunderous accents and undauntedly resumed the examination of his witness.

The three minutes' interruption seemed to last three eternities. The tension became unbearable while the expert in handwriting went on mumbling the abracadabra of his profession. Suddenly my solicitor, who had quitted the Court on a last forlorn hope, bustled his way back with a face of triumph there could be no misreading. In a voice intended not to be confidential, he cried out to Serjeant Boyd: "It's all right. Call Malcolm Johnston!"

In one of those sudden gusts of infantile fretfulness which are apt to sweep over persons of their peculiar mentality, the three essential witnesses, as they sat in

a waiting room adjoining the Court had refused point-blank to be examined and proposed to walk away. Had they persisted, there was no legal coercion, much less private inducement, to detain them. There was, indeed, the certainty that the secret manipulators of public justice would have gladly built a bridge of gold for their flight. They were young and rich, with all the world before them. They had only to call a cab to be in a few minutes safe from the brand of shame which must scorch their brows the moment they stepped into the witness-box. One awful minute after another passed during which it seemed as if nothing less than a visible miracle could avert a collapse of the defence as appalling as an avalanche. Then there came a febrile change as unaccountable as the previous outburst. They fell into a fit of hysterical merriment, quizzed each other over their passionate explosion of a few minutes before as though it had been some grisly practical joke at the expense of the dismayed lawyers, and now only quarrelled in a competition who should be first to reach the witness-chair.

Before the first of them had been half heard, the crisis was over. Once begun, the evidence not only rained, it poured. The Judge, to the last sentence of his charge, persisted in battling like a perverted Athanasius *contra mundum*. He submitted to the jury a list of questions appealing to every imaginable motive for incredulity. All was in vain. When the jury handed down their answers, they left not a loop-hole of escape. The Judge was a man of stainless austerity in private life; it was assuredly only his political grudge against the defendant that could have for a moment sophisticated his accustomed horror of the evil-doer; but it must be recorded that it was with an accent less worthy of a Justice of the High Court who had just beheld an infamous miscarriage of justice averted by a miracle than of a wounded monarch of a Bengal jungle baulked of his prey that

he snapped out : “ These findings mean a verdict for the defendant. Judgment for the defendant with costs ! ”

The volcano of public passion, which had been bubbling up more and more ominously under our feet as the trial went on, burst its bounds, and from the Four Courts overran the city and the country far and wide with its burning flood.

Coercion and its ministers in Ireland—Dublin Castle in all its rotting *oubliettes*, through all the torture-chambers of its “ Law and Justice ”—quaked with a concussion from which they have never quite recovered since. Lord Spencer’s confidence in his Coercion Act and in his leprous subordinates was gone for ever. The discovery that he had been made the cloak for a plot to transfer the duty of chastising a gigantic criminal confederacy from the shoulders of a Government for whom the proofs would have been easy to a political adversary for whom the proofs were known to be, humanly speaking, impossible, must have been accepted as a stinging reproach to his capacity as a statesman, as well as the most exquisite of torments for a man whose honour was, in his own country, little less than a national possession. Before many months were over Earl Spencer made noble amends to Ireland.

But that is another history.

CHAPTER III

SURRENDER !

(1885)

The verdict in the Cornwall case broke the neck of the Coercion Act of 1882-5. A few days after, Mr. George Bolton, "the gnarled oak of the criminal forest," was permitted to set out from the Dublin Bankruptcy Court, where he was at the moment under embargo, to seek consolation for the cause of law and order from an Orange special jury in Belfast. But such excursions had quite lost their savour for the public, in view of the horrid disclosures in Dublin. The injudicious even laughed at the Treasury Crown Solicitor's appeal in robes of righteousness for a verdict that there was actually one item in the Table of Sins of which the world (including *United Ireland*) acquitted him. His trade was at an end. He was never permitted to pack a jury more. His favourite device of offering rewards of thousands of pounds to penniless peasants for any required evidence was publicly abjured as a means of governing Ireland, until it was revived thirty-five years afterwards under the rule of Field-Marshal French. When the Government were at length with a shamed face forced to prosecute County Inspector French and his squalid accomplices, Bolton and even Mr. Serjeant O'Brien himself were debarred from discrediting the prosecutions by having any part in them.

The chorus of dying protestations of innocence from the scaffolds gave rise to investigations here, there and everywhere which filled the country with a sickening suspicion of the methods by which convic-

tions had been secured through the guilty instrumentality of the Treasury Crown Solicitors and the Detective Inspectors. Harrington devoted himself to the task of laying bare the story of Myles Joyce's execution for the Maamtrasna massacre and accumulated such a mass of evidence to show that the organiser of the massacre, who remained unmolested, received enormous subsidies from the Crown all the time that the wrong men were being hanged, that lawyers of the acumen of Sir Charles Russell, from the Liberal Benches, and Sir Edward Clarke, from the Tory Front Bench, united in the demand that the scandal should be probed to the bottom. Similar inquiries led to discoveries of the same character in reference to the trials for the Crossmaglen Conspiracy, for the Barbavilla and Mayo Conspiracies, and for the Tubbercurry Conspiracy, in which the chief agent was a police spy despatched by Detective-Inspector French to set up a blacksmith's forge for the manufacture of pikeheads, and for the consequent manufacture of victims. These evidences were now poured like red-hot shot on the Treasury Bench by men like Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton with a persistency and ability to which the Government no longer offered any but a resistance that was nightly weakening. I can still see Gladstone's great open eyes and forehead broken into ranges of mountainous wrinkles as from his seat behind the Brass Box he saw horror piled upon horror's head until Dante melted to tears by the first shrieks from the Inferno which pierced his soul seemed scarcely a sadder figure. When after listening to the official answer which answered nothing, the old man would gather up his skirts and steal wearily away behind the Chair as limp as his old-fashioned guillotine collar, we all guessed what was coming. And his wretched Chief Secretary, as he sat beside the Prime Minister isolated, cowering, pitiable, death in his soul, his black hair growing visibly grey before us as debate

followed debate—how easily one understood the sincerity of the agonised cry from that most exquisite of litterateurs and most ineffectual of rulers in a distracted day, as he one night groaned forth: “Although I have never been in a battle, I think I realise all its terrors, but I should welcome them all a thousand times rather than sit helplessly by here every other night with the knowledge that presently six or eight Irishmen of ability would get up one after the other to accuse me of deeds of oppression against which every fibre of my being revolts.” And the real anguish must have been that it was the Irishmen who were right and it was he—or rather the monsters he trusted to rule Ireland against her will—who were irredeemably in the wrong. Spencer’s stout soul was not to be plucked down quite so soon; but before three months were over Trevelyan fled from his Irish bed of agony, a stooped, white-haired and broken old man, and there were lost even to literature those rare qualities of soul and intellect which, under a happier star, might have been numbered among the richest possessions of his country.

The last stroke given to the tottering Government of Lord Spencer was, curiously enough, delivered by the Prince of Wales, who was imported in a final effort to prop it up. Whoever lured the Prince into this unpopular service did him a truly disloyal turn. Parnell and Archbishop Croke, in letters to *United Ireland* besought the people to ignore the provocation and to extend to its organisers “the charity of their silence.” The advice was taken. The Prince’s first week in Dublin was an orgie of professional loyalism, unbroken by a single mark of popular disfavour, even after the Trinity College students had flaunted uproariously through the town parading a broom at their head and insulted the Nationalist Lord Mayor on the steps of the City Hall. The London Press, whose impertinences did nearly as much to make the English

name detested in the nineteenth century as confiscation and the sword had made it in the seventeenth century and fiendish religious persecutions in the eighteenth, were not to be outdone by the Trinity College mohawks. *The Times* lifted its voice in triumphal shouts that the hollowness of Irish disaffection had been once more demonstrated, the advice of Parnell and Dr. Croke flouted, and their power forever broken. Reserve on the part of the Irish people received its traditional reward from their tactless Cockney critics. The self-restraint of a nation burning with rage against their Castle rulers was coolly adduced as proof that, at the first gracious smile from a Prince, they were ready to laugh their own grievances to scorn and desert their elected leaders to follow the victorious broomstick of the Trinity College boys.

The challenge did not long remain unanswered. The Prince's first day outside Dublin was to bring him to Mallow on his way to the mansion of the Marquis of Waterford. On the evening before his arrival, I found my constituents infuriated by the action of a section of the local Town Commissioners, who had resolved to present a cringing address of welcome, specially framed to corroborate the worst taunts of *The Times* and its brethren. Our determination to set the English public right as to the true state of Irish feeling was noised abroad in every accent of alarm, and the Resident Magistrate—a member of a popular Tipperary family, the Butlers of Ballycarron, and a brother of the famous general, Sir William Butler—made a call at my hotel after dark to urge a friendly remonstrance. “In most things, your friends are not far wrong,” he said, “you will win in the long run, but you know you can only convince England by moderation.” “Yes,” was my reply, “the moderation that held its tongue since the Prince came to Dublin, and is rewarded by *The Times*' discovery that we have exchanged Parnell for Lord Spencer as our national

hero." "But, after all, you must admit that Mallow is a nest of loyalists." "Yes, loyalists of the sort that have made me their representative. That is all I intend to make clear." "But was such a thing ever heard of? Assembling a mob to hoot the heir to the throne!" "On the contrary, Captain Butler, assembling his subjects to tell him the truth—one of the most ordinary things in England's constitutional history." "I have not come to wrangle, you must know well what will be the result. The people and yourself will be shot down." "No doubt, Captain Butler, you will be able during the night to collect policemen and troops enough to do the shooting, but you will have to shoot us for not taking our politics from Lord Spencer, for I assure you we are not going to give you any pretext beyond making that point understood by all England." His last words to me were: "You are a terrible man—God protect us all!"

The next morning the railway platforms were held by strong forces of policemen and soldiers in the midst of whom the local gentry and the shambling authors of the civic address were securely entrenched. But lo! the incoming trains from south and north disgorged on the platforms Nationalist brass bands with their banners, which were not provided for in the official programme, and the precincts of the station were swarming with common people, perfectly decorous but ominously grim. The first sign that there was mischief brewing was the appearance in charge of the police of a blustering County Inspector, Carr by name, who, it must without circumlocution be recorded, was visibly and riotously under the influence of whiskey, even at that matutinal hour. I was approached by the two Resident Magistrates, who were nominally in charge of the public forces, to know what I proposed to do, and replied that I proposed to make the Prince aware that the little knot of gentlemen who were about to present him with a wholly mis-

leading representation of Irish feeling must not be taken to speak for the people of Mallow or of Ireland. While we were still discussing whether this object could not be attained by a delegation of the five members of Parliament present without any unnecessary outbreak of popular passion, the tipsy County Inspector, who had been listening to our conversation in a state of furious impatience, suddenly burst in "I'll stand no more of this damn nonsense. I've got my orders. Men, clear the platform! Charge!" and without the slightest tenderness for the feelings of the civil magistrates, from whom he was supposed to take his orders, Mr. Carr dashed madly into the midst of the unarmed groups on the platform without a moment's warning at the head of his charging battalion, batoning, kicking, and brutalising bandsmen, women, and members of Parliament alike, with a savagery only relieved by the spectacle of the brute's own unsteady legs giving way under him and stretching him at full length across the rails.

The bubble blown by the Cockney able editors was already burst, and by Dublin Castle's own alcoholised zealot. From that hour forth, it was known to the world that batons and bayonets were the only real forms of affection passing between England and her Irish subjects. Mr. Carr's brutalities simply succeeded in transferring from the railway station to an eminence overlooking it some fifty yards away a crowd now quadrupled in numbers and roused to an angrier resentment than ever. While the Prince's train was nearing Mallow, the respectable Carr made another desperate effort to welcome His Royal Highness with the spectacle of a massacre. He marched a column of constabulary-men armed with carbines and fixed bayonets right up to the breasts of Harrington and myself, who stood in front of the immense gathering now assembled outside the walls of the station. He was fortunately accompanied by the two Resident

Magistrates, for whom, however, he made no disguise of his contempt. "Clear out of this!" he bellowed. "I have my orders. If you open your lips while the Prince is here, my men will shoot you down." "You are a bully and a coward," I could not help saying. "If you shoot you will have to shoot me first." "And me!" "And me!" exclaimed Harrington and my other Parliamentary colleagues, who joined hands as a living breastwork between the levelled carbines and the people. "I'll shoot every damned one of you!" was the reply, the speaker now purple and black with excitement. "I have my orders, and I'll do it. I don't care a damn!" It is quite certain that he would have been as good as his word but for the cool intrepidity of Captain Butler, who gently intimated to him that he had not yet got *his* orders, and that these orders were to fall back and allow him to make his own arrangements. The County Inspector continued to splutter out feelings eloquent but inarticulate, but he did nothing more tragic while Captain Butler was striking up a bargain with my colleagues and myself demarking the line beyond which the crowd were not to advance.

Even before the bargain was concluded, the whistle of the royal train was heard, and the genius of the County Inspector's strategy was manifested in all its glory. For the armed forces who were to have saluted the Prince were drawn away for deeds of derring-do outside the station, and the unoffending Prince found himself face to face with a group of shivering flunkeys on the deserted platform, while the air was rent with a roar of "Parnell for ever!" and "Down with Foxy Jack!" (the popular nickname for the Red Earl), and bands and people burst into a chorus of "God Save Ireland!" which never left His Royal Highness' ears until his train was shunted safely beyond the reach of all this rebel tumult and of County Inspector Carr's more offensive loyalty.

Henry Labouchere long afterwards told me that, in the smoke-room of an English country house, the Prince of Wales owned to him that it was from his experiences that day in Mallow he dated his first relish for Home Rule. It was the first time a hostile cry from the people had ever grated on his ear. What struck him most was that until the Cockney wise men began their flouts he had found himself in a pleasant Dublin where a well-bred people, if they could not cheer, at least forbore to trouble the ill-timed festivities, but that from the morning when the fountains of the great deep were broken up at Mallow, not a day and scarcely an hour passed without some rude lesson that England was only able to rule a charming country by brute force wielded by incredible scoundrels. When he reached Cork city, it was to be mobbed by fifty thousand people by nature soft and sunny-hearted to a fault ; to be repelled as he drove to visit the Queen's College by the students tearing down the Union Jack from its tower at his approach ; to find that even the stern order of the Whig Bishop to the Nuns of the Good Shepherd Convent for an official reception led to a revolt of the children who refused flatly to be drilled into singing " God bless the Prince of Wales," and that the few priests who obeyed His Lordship's mandate to attend were hooted through the streets by the most Catholic people in Europe. Wherever he went until he quitted the island, a Prince who was *bon enfant* inside all his Royal gauds and fripperies, had black flags thrust in his face, found his ears filled with execrations of Earl Spencer and the Castle, saw bands of music assemble to entertain him not with courtly hosannas, but with the strident challenge of rebellion, and his royal escorts while they were in the act of giving him the salute, called away to charge and break the heads of his liege subjects. In the city of Derry itself, where he was to take his departure, bayonet charges and answering yells were the last

testimonies that reached him of the wisdom of *The Times* newspaper. Only by such "flashes struck from midnights" was it possible for Ireland to make the plainest truth manifest to England and to turn the Heir Apparent into a Home Ruler.

Pray do not imagine the list is yet exhausted of the dangers to be fought down before the iron administration of Lord Spencer could be laid in the dust. Two of them deserve a word of special mention—the Ulster Difficulty, and the despatch of the first secret envoy of England to the Vatican.

The lurid success of the recent threats of an Orange rebellion has led us to forget the lesson taught by an Ulster outbreak during Lord Spencer's proconsulate which was strikingly alike in what the Chamberlain of that day called its "unreasoning ferocity," but which, unlike Sir E. Carson's contingent treason, was firmly met and decisively put down. The facts are well worth a brief retrospect. As soon as the Reform Act of 1884 enfranchised the Irish "mud cabin vote," it became for the first time possible to nationalise the representation of Ulster, and, a Nationalist majority once achieved in Ulster, to make the claim for Home Rule constitutionally an irresistible one. All this was no less clear to the Tory oligarchs then supreme, in Ulster than it was to Parnell. Then and there they took up the astounding position that any attempt of the Nationalists to make the new franchise available north of the Boyne would be resented as "an invasion of Ulster," and they revived the Orange Order in all its bloodthirsty savagery to stamp out with their rifles and revolvers any attempt to hold so much as a franchise meeting within their borders. Their contempt for a mere Imperial Act of Parliament surpassed even that of Sir E. Carson's "Provisional Government." Great lords and Deputy Lieutenants in whose blood still rioted a prerogative that had never been challenged did not wait until the

Franchise Act came into force. They took the field and produced their revolvers with the frank programme of taking the life of the first Nationalist who might cross the border of "the loyal province" and of all who might follow him. In one of their public proclamations they undertook "to make work for the coroners on the bodies" of "Parnell's Fenian and Murder League Conspiracy." In another, we were promised to be sent back for sepulture in "the bloody shrouds of Aughrim and the Boyne." The candid plan of campaign was, wherever the Nationalists proposed to hold a franchise meeting, to summon a counter-meeting and to transport special trainloads of armed Orangemen from one to the other all over the province, with the special injunction to "be all ready with your sweethearts (revolvers) and plenty of stuff," and "never to use your revolvers except you were firing at some one" (the latter being the gentle contribution of one Mr. Murray Ker, D.L., to the debate). The frenzied incitements of the peers and country gentlemen were countenanced by an untimely tour of Ulster by Sir Stafford Northcote, whose playful advice: "Don't go firing off your rifles in the gaiety of your hearts" was translated by his fanatical hearers in Belfast into a dastardly attack upon a Convent of Nuns, resulting in the death of the Rev. Mother a few hours later. The attempt of one of the most blameless enthusiasts for the franchise, the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Mr. Dawson, M.P.) to deliver a lecture on the new Reform Act in the Guildhall of Derry (now one of the fastest of Irish Nationalist strongholds) was resisted in arms by a band of "Apprentice Boys," headed by Lord Ernest Hamilton, who seized upon the Hall by a ruse and poured a shower of revolver shots from the roof, causing men to drop wounded on this side and that of the Lord Mayor as he approached. Even when, with the recollection of this bloody aggression fresh in his thoughts, Lord Spencer himself

forbade an Orange celebration in Derry a month or two after, Lord Claude Hamilton, M.P. (son of an ex-Viceroy), declined to be intimidated by "the whiff and wind of a Viceregal proclamation," and defiantly announced that "if the Government do not prevent those hordes of ruffians from invading us, we will take the law into our own hands, and we ourselves will."

All this was in the best 'Ercles vein of Sir Edward Carson thirty years later. It was Sir Edward's luck, however, to deal with a feeble Executive and a feebler Irish Party, and his "unreasoning ferocity" carried the day. His predecessors in the trade of Orange bigotry up for political sale had to encounter a Viceroy who, be it freely owned, declined to recognise any divine right to indulge in illegality and murder by calling it loyalty, and above all they had to do with leaders of the people who carried out their plans for "the invasion of Ulster" to the uttermost glens of Antrim with but a meagre respect for the adjectives or revolvers of the noble lords who blocked the way. What happened at Rosslea was typical of dozens of similar demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. The Grand Master of the Monaghan Orangemen, Lord Rossmore, a rollicking Irish dragoon, with the warm heart and the too hot head of his countrymen, North as well as South, threw himself into the sport of repelling "the Invasion of Ulster" with the enthusiasm of a big-game shooter. His notion of a public meeting on the new Franchise question was to march some thousands of his armed Orange babes of grace into the thick of the Nationalists to disperse them, in flat defiance of the orders of Captain McTernan, the Resident Magistrate, declaring with the joyous recklessness of a Charles O'Malley on a battle morning, that "he would not be stopped by a Resident Magistrate or by anyone else, and was perpared to take the consequences." His style of constitutional oratory was to make a speech punctuated at every telling point

by volleys of revolver shots, of which the proud chronicler declares that "hundreds of pistols and revolvers were discharged and a continuous fusilade was maintained for nearly fifteen minutes, to the great amazement of police and military alike." The legend is known of the Lord Inchiquin who, for burning the Cathedral in Cashel could only plead in excuse that "he thought the Archbishop was inside." There was an unpleasant incident when Lord Rossmore's zealots "pulled off the car and inflicted a severe blow on the head with a stick, inflicting serious injury" to Mr. W. Copeland Trimble, editor of *The Fermanagh Reporter* (as it happened one of their own most devoted apostles in the Orange Press), but they gently pleaded in extenuation that "they unfortunately mistook him for Mr. T. M. Healy, M.P." Lord Spencer's sense of the humour of these things was lacking. "A half company of soldiers and a troop of lancers were thrown across the bridge" which Lord Rossmore insisted upon passing, and not only was his Lordship forced to bow his crest and tame his heart of fire before this uncivil treatment, but a few days afterwards he received a stern letter from the Lord Chancellor dismissing him from the magistracy as a disturber of the peace. Nay, when the loyal magistrates of Ulster rose up in arms almost to a man against the Government "who had so basely requited Lord Rossmore for his manly efforts in support of law and order," Lord Spencer went further. When these model pillars of law and order proceeded to repeat the Rosslea performance at Dromore by importing special trainloads of Orangemen from Belfast, the excursionists found themselves waylaid at the station by the police, who, to quote Mr. Trevelyan's description to the House of Commons "took sackfuls of revolvers from them," and those who demurred were chased across the country by the Lancers and one of the unfortunate Belfast trippers run through the body.

Admirable firmness twice or thrice, if it were not marred by Lord Spencer's undertaking himself to suppress what were admittedly lawful Nationalist meetings in districts where the Orangemen were not strong enough to attempt their suppression themselves. In two such districts as Newry and Blacklion—now recognised to be as stout Nationalist strongholds as Cork—the Orange minority had only to issue a blood-red placard summoning a counter-demonstration to elicit Viceregal proclamations suppressing the lawful and the lawless manifestations alike. For the half-dozen men upon whom fell the brunt of the battle in Ireland, it was a strenuous time. In the intervals between calls to Parliament and prosecutions for sedition and libel actions, and the redaction of a journal of which every number was a pitched battle against redoubtable foes, and of which every number might be the last, we were hurried away by night mail trains to this or that Ulster venue, either to encounter rival demonstrations resounding with revolver-shots, or bayonet charges from an impartial Executive, or sometimes both together. But the essential was that there was no yielding an inch to the one or to the other. We never failed to carry out our programme to the letter, no matter how loud the Orange lions roared from a neighbouring hill, and wherever the Executive were the aggressors, if they proclaimed one meeting, we seldom failed to hold six. Before many months were over, the astounding pretension to forbid the new Reform Act from working in "the Imperial Province" was sullenly dropped. With the General Election, the Nationalist "Invaders" who were not to be allowed to address a village meeting north of the Boyne on pain of death became the majority of the Parliamentary representatives of Ulster; of all the "work" that was to be "made for the Coroners on our bodies" the only body on which a Coroner found employment was that of the unlucky Orangeman from

Belfast who was bayoneted at Dromore ; and Mr. Healy and myself found ourselves members for two Ulster constituencies which, twelve months before, we were forbidden to enter (or to leave) except " in the bloody shrouds of Aughrim and the Boyne." Pleasantest of all to relate, Lord Rossmore, the Orange Grand Master of the Rosslea fight, lived to stand upon an All-for-Ireland platform in Cork by our side, and for the thousandth time proved that, for genial daring, for inborn good-heartedness, and (now and again) for impulsive wrongheadedness, your true Orangeman is an excellent Irish Nationalist wrong side out. A lesson which it were well had been remembered by a late fumbling Home Rule Ministry and their Irish advisers or dupes.

England's intrigues at Rome were a harder matter to fight. Throughout the three years after the effacement of the Land League, while the shadow of Coercion lay black over the prostrate country, England had a secret diplomatic agent and innumerable unofficial ones, English and Irish, at the Vatican, to solicit help to compel the withdrawal of the people's allegiance from their Protestant leader, and, when that failed, to strike at the liberty of the Catholic prelates themselves. If these poison-plots abroad were as effectually baffled as those of the Castle terrorists at home, to Archbishop Croke, of all men, must the greater praise belong. While public spirit was at its lowest, he essayed a daring stroke of therapeutics to re-invigorate it. He publicly proposed a National Tribute to Parnell " for the splendid public services by which he had earned the bitter hatred of every enemy of his country." It had become known that Parnell's spendings owing to the revolutionary exigencies of his leadership had onerated his modest estate in Wicklow with a mortgage of £14,000 and that the mortgagee, under hostile instigation, was threatening foreclosure. For a time, it seemed as if

the remedy might be as desperate as the disease. The response from a deeply despondent country was a hesitating and feeble one. Parnell himself one night took me aside to read me a letter he had written putting a summary stop to the project. "O'Connell never passed a happy day after he became a dependant upon public subscriptions" was one of his observations. His pride, doubtless, also, was not insensible to various omens of a humiliating failure. However, from certain semi-admissions wrung from him as painfully as from a witness on the rack, it was clear to me that the necessity was sufficiently urgent to make his withdrawal from public affairs the inexorable alternative. Once it came to that, I had passionate arguments enough to dissuade him from a course so fatal to the cause of the distracted country, and so unworthy of his own stoical insensibility to the meanesses of politician criticism. In a corner of the basement smoke-room, we talked it over hours after the House had risen, after the police-guard had taken up their posts against the dynamiters in the darkened corridors, and after the cloakroom attendant and the policeman had put in their remonstrant heads again and again, with a resigned cheerfulness which, I think, no other member of the House except Parnell could have inspired. He ended by tearing up his letter and throwing its fragments into the waste-paper basket, with the merry remark which always followed a grave decision taken: "The only pleasure I ever have in writing anything is to tear it up."

The subscriptions to the Tribute still painfully dragged. It really looked as if nothing short of another miracle of Lazarus could awaken the country from its apathy of death, when the miracle arrived from a most unexpected quarter. The Irish Bishops received with stupefaction from Cardinal Simeoni, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda, a Rescript anathematising the proposed Parnell tribute

in terms that might well have made Irishmen's hair stand on end, and forbidding the Bishops and their priests "to subscribe to or aid in raising subscriptions intended to inflame popular passions and excite the Irish people to rebellion against the laws." The Tribute which was hanging fire in the absence of any organised effort at all was actually dealt with as though it were some blackmail levied by masked midnight assassins. ("Pressure of intimidation" was the pontifical way of putting it.) And the inconceivable insult was added of describing Parnell's followers—the elected representatives of a people they had redeemed from an unspeakable agrarian slavery—by a term of indignity so gross as "asseclae." To make matters worse, it was pretty notorious that the circular was the outcome of a negotiation for the appointment of a Papal Nuncio in London and an accredited English envoy at the Vatican, as the price of a condemnation of the Irish people and their leader which was really little less than an exorcism. As a final happy thought, England's intrigue at Rome was confided to a renegade Home Rule member (Mr. George Errington), who was scouted out of public life with scarcely a dissenting voice by his constituents, and after his failure, was dismissed to oblivion by an ungrateful England with the sorry viaticum of a knighthood.¹

Cardinal Simeoni's Rescript scandalised the Irish people only less (as Mr. Healy wittily observed at the time) than if it had announced "the induction of Mr.

¹ *United Ireland* exploded the Errington mission, to the consternation of the sordid English intriguers and the derision of the world, by publishing on August 1st, 1885, the following confidential communication from Mr. Errington to the Foreign Secretary :

"House of Commons, Friday, 15th May.

"Dear Lord Granville,

"*The Dublin Archbishop-rick (sic) being still undecided, I must continue to keep the Vatican in good humour about you, and keep up communication with them generally as much as possible.*

"I am almost ashamed to trouble you again, when you are so

George Errington into the Chair of Peter ” ; but their astoundment was that of men outraged, not of men intimidated. The unhappy political relations between Rome and England, with the object of turning the Irish Bishops and priests into dependants and servitors of English Rule, had several times before during the century led to similar invasions of the political rights of the Irish Catholics and had been firmly repelled—by none with more superb civic courage than by the most Catholic of Irish Catholic laymen, Daniel O’Connell. The new intrigue elicited an even prompter reprobation and the nettle was still less gently handled. It became instantly a point of honour not merely to pay off the modest mortgage of £14,000 but to raise a tribute of £40,000 of truly national dimensions.

The Archbishop of Cashel, who had been summoned to Rome to make answer to Mr. George Errington’s rubbishy accusations, found his advice slighted in favour of that of the Irish renegade in England’s pay. On his return home, he told the students of the Irish College in Paris : “ I come back from Rome as I went to Rome, unchanged and unchangeable ” ; and every man of the race understood his message. He, however, recognised that the Rescript, so far as it

busy, but perhaps on Monday you would allow me to show you the letter I propose to write.

“ This premature report about Dr. Moran will cause increased pressure to be put on the Pope, and create many fresh difficulties. The matter must therefore be most carefully watched, so that the strong pressure I can still command may be used at the right moment, and not too soon or unnecessarily (for too much pressure is quite as dangerous as too little). To effect this, constant communication with Rome is necessary.

“ I am, dear Lord Granville,

“ Faithfully yours,

“ G. ERRINGTON.”

Dr. (afterwards Cardinal) Moran was England’s candidate for Archbishop of Dublin, and Monsignor Neville for Bishop of Cork. Both nominations were defeated.

exacted obedience from the Bishops and priests themselves, was not to be by them resisted. In his sitting room at the Royal Marine Hotel, in Kingstown, where he was, as he put it, "dodging" the tremendous popular welcome awaiting him in Dublin, he told me things which had perhaps better remain unwritten as to his experiences at the hands of some of the minor officials at the Vatican, where he was day after day kept with fingers drumming in ante-chambers until he threatened to leave Rome, while the pitiful Home Rule renegade was ushered into audience with the Ambassadors. "It is all the fault of the Irish Bishops themselves," with that mixture of strong sense and plain speaking with genial waggery which was the *cachet* of the man. "There is not a man amongst them except myself who can even speak French or Italian. They have about as much influence as a black Bishop I met from Portuguese India. Even he had some smattering of Portuguese." He, nevertheless, sternly adhered to his programme of silence, even while the big-boned men of his vast Archdiocese were thronging round him with their bands and bonfires.

As was said of Suwarrow at a famous siege "he made no answer, but he took the city." His silence was more stimulating than any speeches could be. Smarting under the sting of England's new pretension to dictate their faith and morals as well as their political aspirations, the people poured in their subscriptions, no longer in rills, but in rivers. Before the winter was over the proscribed Irish leader was presented with a cheque for £40,000 by the nation, and Cardinal Simeoni found it diplomatic to explain that nothing could have accorded more happily with His Eminence's plans. But the technical obedience of the Bishops neither mollified the Congregation of Propaganda nor disarmed England's activities at the Holy See. During the next two years, while the jail and the gallows, the informer, the hangman and the official organiser of

crime continued to be the principal instruments of government in Ireland, England's secret agents continued to ply the Court of Rome with libels upon the Irish people and their Bishops grotesque enough to have been the work of some ribald practical joker. Nor was the temper of Propaganda improved by finding itself under the necessity in the two very notable cases of the vacancies in the great sees of Dublin and Cork to pass over the nominees of England for distinguished friends of the new democracy under pressure of the growing self-assertion of the laity and their Prelates. The Archbishop of Cashel, whose courage had really saved the Church in Ireland from an upheaval that might easily enough have been a schism, was once more bidden to Rome and this time on the dread summons *ad audiendum verbum*.

His own account of what followed was so often and with such particularity related to me by the great Archbishop, that it is not to be believed that he desired it to be forgotten. When he was admitted to the Presence Chamber, Pope Leo was seated on his throne at the further end of the room. On crossing the doorstep the Archbishop made his first genuflection. As he advanced to the middle of the room he knelt for the second time. "*Basta!*" (enough!) came a sharp interjection from the throne. "Let us get to business!" "No, Holy Father," was the reply always in his own Italian. "The Rubric prescribes three genuflections. That is number two," and after another of his gigantic strides: "That is number three," as he knelt for the third time at the Pope's feet and impressed a kiss on his jewelled slipper. "Now, Holy Father, you have only to command."

The Pope, referring to quite a *dossier* of written documents by his side, questioned the Archbishop, with a lofty gravity and with unconcealed pain, as to a long bill of indictment against his Archdiocese and his nation. The accusations were worthy of the

sort of crazy exaggerations retailed around the dining-tables of Catholic landlords or in the anti-Irish Press. A sample of the bunch was the story of the most comical episode in Forster's *Dunciad*, when a battalion of the Coldstream Guards was actually (this present deponent saw the deed !) ordered to charge the ruins of an ancient keep near the Limerick Junction to find nothing within the roofless walls except a babble of frightened rooks. The Archbishop found some difficulty in preserving his composure while this ridiculous exploit was depicted to him as the victorious assault of an English *corps d'armée* against an insurgent stronghold in his Archdiocese. His explanations were patient and crushing—perhaps too crushing. “My son, you are handing over your country to Irish Mazzinis and Garibaldis,” pronounced the Pope, pained to the quick. “Well, most Holy Father,” was the reply, “I know nothing of Mazzini or Garibaldi except their bad names. But if they were condemned for no better reason than we are reviled by England, I am not surprised that the Church in Italy is the most powerless in Europe to-day while the Church in Ireland is the richest gem in your tiara.” The Pope rose. “*Basta ! basta !*” he cried. “Rome will speak !” Pope Leo, who might have been a saint in alabaster, could upon occasion flash all the lightnings of Rome from his black eyes ; he was frankly angry.

“Good, Holy Father,” was the reply of the great Irishman. “If Rome speaks I will obey. But, with my homage to the Chair of Peter be it said, I’ll go into my pulpit in Thurles and tell my people, it is Rome I am obeying and not the dictates of my own Irish heart and brain, and that will be the last time I shall ever address them as Archbishop of Cashel.”

Dr. Croke had the advantage of possessing a sufficient private fortune, which enabled him all through his life to leave the temporalities of his Archdiocese

untouched. Like Daniel O'Connell and many another harassed Irish leader, before and since, he had more than once let his thoughts dwell upon the delights of a life of retirement amidst the mountain heather and the heavenly orisons of the Trappist Monastery at Mount Melleray. It seemed as if the hour for his decision had struck.

Rome did not speak. Far from returning under censures or in manacles, the Archbishop arrived in his rejoicing country at the moment when the Government that had maintained Errington as its calumnious whisperer at Rome was chased from office by Irish votes. As he entered Dublin Earl Spencer was flying from its port, leaving behind him in ruins and shame the whole edifice of Castle misgovernment and defamation which had imposed upon the unworldly credulity of Cardinal Simeoni. The very statesmen whose names had stood sponsors for the calumnies Archbishop Croke had just been answering were about to proclaim themselves converts to the Archbishop's politics and allies of the Parnell and the *asseclae* whose side His Grace had taken like a hero when all the world seemed to be bearing them down with its brute strength and poisons.

He never made the journey *ad limina* again ; but he lived to see Pope Leo—one of the mightiest of his incomparable dynasty—as enlightened a friend of his Irish ideals as Gladstone or Spencer. Time smoothed out even the roughness of the last personal contact. Seventeen years later, in the Ambassadors' Room of Cardinal Rampolla in the Cour San Damaso, while the Secretary of State was adroitly canvassing my views of various high ecclesiastical personages in Ireland I hazarded the observation : " But to be quite frank with your Eminence, the Irish Race think more of Dr. Croke than of all the rest put together." The slightest elevation of the old diplomatist's eye-brows might have suggested that he was shocked, only that

it was followed instantly by a cordial and almost laughing note of appreciation : “ *Ah ! oui, Cruek est un brave homme !* ” And a *brave homme* means something very different from a mere *homme brave*. “ A fine fellow,” truly, if one ever gladdened the earth ! When I reached Ireland, Dr. Croke lay on his death-bed. It remains not the least of life’s heart wounds that I was not permitted to deliver to him a message from Rome that would have brought a last draught of fun as well as joy to that undaunted spirit.

The fall of Earl Spencer was for me a release not to be beaten for heavenly delight by that of the Italian poet emerging from the pit of fire to see once more the stars of heaven, or, to be less grandiose, the relief of an emaciated stage coach horse set free to crawl back to the stable. By what seems a law of nature for a constitution curiously compounded of nerves and of nerve, my power of endurance has never failed me while danger loomed ahead, and has always collapsed as soon as the stress was over and the victory secure. Keen as was my thanksgiving for the overthrow of a power that, three years before, seemed as inexorable as Death—and I was not yet aware of the fairest part of the good tidings, which was that Spencer was departing, not merely as a defeated Coercionist, but as a convinced Home Ruler, next to Gladstone the most steadfast English Home Ruler of his generation—the stress was no sooner at an end, than my brain flatly refused to function and my body seemed to have little left except a collection of old bones. Our Party doctor, so to say, Joe Kenny—“the beloved physician” was our Pauline pet name for him—packed me up for abroad without going through the ceremony of consulting me, and I had the good fortune to secure the sweetest-tempered of travelling companions in “Willie” Redmond. We voyaged to Flushing, Antwerp, Brussels, up the Rhine from Cologne to Mayence, and by Strasburg across the Swiss Ober-

land to Geneva, and saw and did the things which millions saw and did before us and have done after us. The one daring originality in our itinerary may not be too trivial to be recorded.

We took the boat from Ouchy to descend Lake Lemman for Geneva. For golden hours we floated upon a sea of opaline blue past the enchanted ground of a thousand dreams—Chillon, where Byron recompensed the torments of the Bonnivard family with an immortality—the Clarens of Madame de Warens and her Jean Jacques, the ineffable cad of the *Confessions*, the *Emile* who did more to revolutionise the world than all the red-night cappers who demolished the Bastille—the dazzling white fangs of the Dents du Midi, like those of a new race of Titans preparing to assault the skies ; and presently at St. Gingolph the cocked hat of the first gendarme in beautiful France. The day ran on : the memory of the *dejeuner* in the saloon was already a distant one. There was still no sign of Geneva, but that did not much disconcert one who was feasting his eyes upon their first faint vision of Mont Blanc in its glittering robes of glaciers, basking the while in that luxury of wandering thoughts which is for a tired brain a divine way of doing nothing. Of a sudden I was called back to a world of clay by the startling discovery that the Grand Hotels of Evian which we had passed in review hours before were approaching us in a long procession again. With some uneasiness I went in search of my fellow-traveller. Honest Willie, whose appetite for the poetry of Nature had its limits, had settled down cosily in the saloon to sleep away the lengthy hours to Geneva. It was not until we repassed the pier of St. Gingolph, to see the same gendarme in the same cocked hat and yellow baldric, that we did at long last what we should have done at first—namely, to consult the man abaft the funnel. “ Ah ! Geneva ! ” he responded with the sweetest courtesy, “ Monsieur without doubt in-

tended to take the boat by the north shore ! ” Without doubt ! verily ! we had taken the wrong boat and were returning by the same delicious dreamland of the morning ! For hours after, well into the flaming sunset, Willie Redmond and I made proof how little the creamiest enthusiasm for Alpine peaks and romantic vineyards will bear a second skimming, as we revisited the panorama of our morning hours with a half-formed imprecation that Bonnivard and Byron and Jean Jacques ever had been born. Our greatest terror of all, I think, was how to face the hotel clerk and the *sommelier* and the chambermaid of the Grand Hotel National to whom we had made our ceremonious adieus and administered our humble tips in the morning that now seemed an eternity ago. Little we knew the bottomless charity of that large-minded folk for the eccentricities of the foreign globe-trotter. Nothing but a ceremonious smile of welcome, and the all but inappreciable shrug of the shoulder which would not for worlds say in plain French : “ Ah ! these English ! ”

CHAPTER IV

THE PARNELL OF THE EIGHTIES

I—THE MAN

Parnell has always been described as "an elusive personality" both by those who had not the wit to understand him and by those who did not deserve to be admitted to his confidence. The truth is, that the fault lay with themselves and not with him. He was at the core simplicity itself. "I have never been a Parnellite," he once smilingly remarked and it was, true of his contempt both for self-introspection and for the squalors of political faction-fighting.

He was not Irish, was the comforting thought of Englishmen whom he beat on their own ground of icy coolness and passionless plainness of speech. "I have always envied the member for Cork," Gladstone once owned in the House of Commons with a rueful countenance, "his gift for saying precisely what he wants to say—neither a word more, nor a word less." It was so little Irish!

English members who in the early Obstruction conflicts saw him ordered to discontinue his speech and withdraw while the House was considering his suspension, and when he was invited back into a House still boiling with excitement heard him resume his speech at the very sentence at which he left off with the words: "As I was remarking, Mr. Speaker, when I was interrupted"—could make nothing of an Irish leader with less than themselves of the Keltic excitability or quarrelsomeness, or (so they pleased to put it) rant. There was some consolation, such as it

was, in the taunt that Parnell was not a pure-bred Gael ; no, but still less was there a trait of Anglo-Saxonism in his face, his temper, his mentality, or anything that was his. The outward masque he derived from his American ancestry with his impassiveness, his invulnerability of chilled steel, his keenness for the practical side of things, and his undoubted if deeply submerged sense of humour ; Parnell had no no more natural temptation to claim kinship with England than his grandfather Stewart—the old Ironsides of the American War—had to weep for the fate of the English frigates whom his good cutlass and his grappling irons were chasing from the seas. No American had any difficulty in understanding Parnell. “ I have come to see the man who has made John Bull listen,” Wendell Philipps, the celebrated orator, one night said in the Faneuil Hall in Boston. We may be sure that in the qualities which enabled this quiet gentleman to break the Parliament of England instead of the Parliament of England breaking him, Wendell Philipps saw more family resemblance with the idealism of Abe Lincoln, the lath-splitter of the backwoods and the glory of the Western Hemisphere, than with a pragmatism of the Anglo-Saxon breed.

But with all that, and beyond all that, Parnell was as Irish as the voices of the rivers of Moore’s “ Meeting of the Waters ” as they sang their way through the woods of his own demesne at Avondale. It took two centuries of Penal legislation to prevent the Parnells from becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves—if even then the Gaelic magic did not prevail. There is no anti-Irishman of the name on record. His mother entertained a hatred of England heated to the point of fanaticism. Her house in Merrion Square was a favourite resort of the Irish-American officers who swarmed over to captain the Fenian Insurrection. The place was under the constant supervision of the police. I have heard Parnell say that the first (and I

suspect the last) time he ever found himself singing was when he joined the heady chorus of Michael Scanlan's " Out and make way for the Fenian men ! " as it was roared by the bronzed soldiers of the Civil War in his mother's dining-room. It was there, too, he first saw his predecessor in the Irish leadership, Isaac Butt, large part of whose fees for the defence of the Fenian men, it may safely be guessed, came from Mrs. Parnell's pocket. England would be wise to note the fact that it was this contact with the much-reviled Fenian filibusters which settled the destinies of the old Protestant Tory man of genius and the young Protestant squire from Cambridge as apostles of Irish Nationality.

Those who picture Parnell to themselves as a man without imagination deceive themselves by forgetting that his imagination lived chiefly in those worlds of Science which in the Victorian days were, even in the dreams of the Ruskins and the Brownings, the high heaven of Poetry. The man whose lonely evenings at Aughavanagh were passed in working out problems of the measurement of the mountains and the stars—of whom Mr. Morley tells us that, while the House of Commons was panting to hear him on the Pigott forgeries, he left the House to superintend some chemical assay of his alluvial gold deposits at Avondale—was not the kind of person to put his thoughts in mellow metres. It is none the less true that it was not for nothing that a gentle poet was—shall we say before, or next to himself?—the most shining ornament of his house. For the mere tools or tricks of Poetry he cared no more than a blind man for pictures. On the rare occasions when he quoted verses, it was as though he were making a joke, and he had them generally topsy-turvy. Once when he ventured upon Moore's hackneyed vision of Ireland :

“ Great, glorious and free

First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea.”

he blundered at the close into a stammered

“ First flower of the earth,
and first—ah !—jewel of—ah !—the ocean.”

“ ‘ Gem,’ Parnell, not ‘ jewel,’ ” whispered one of his colleagues. “ Don’t you think ‘ jewel ’ is a better word ? ” he replied with entire complacency. But Poetry is not a thing of tinsel or of jingling words. His choice for his shooting-lodge of the bare barrack built high in the mountain wastes to put down the Wicklow Insurrection—the fondness with which he would point out the stone on which Holt and his brother insurgents sharpened their pikeheads—the romantic gusto with which he would relate how nearly his grandfather, Sir John Parnell, the last Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to be hanged for an adventurous plot to rush Dublin Castle by the raid of a disaffected regiment of Wicklow Horse (a project which, he always maintained, would have revolutionised the fortunes of the Insurrection of 98)—his fit of silent solemnity one night while we stood in the glen of the rivers, listening to their mystic whispers as they died away in the immensities of the surrounding mountain ravines—all gave hints of poetic imaginings more authentic than a good many ballad-makers can manage to fit into their rhymes.

At least, he was a haughty and a dictatorial man ? On the evidence of what witness who ever truly knew him ? Not of any of his modest household at Avondale ; they would have thought it too good luck to give their lives for him. Not of any of the thousands of village captains who saw him in habit as he lived in the midst of idolising mass meetings and at the excruciating “ banquets ” with which they generally wound up. In the most primitive country inn, regaled with cookery for which there was often little to plead except the good intentions of the cook, in an atmosphere of boisterous rustic enjoyment, he was not merely the courteous guest smiling away discomforts :

he was as simple, as happy, and as much at home as his most unsophisticated neighbour at the table. He was not haughty even with the great. He moved among statesmen and nobles with an utter lack of self-consciousness which put them instantly at their ease, and an absolute incapacity to feel otherwise than at ease himself—placid, attentive, respectful to high or low. That he was not a sociable or a marrying man was perhaps a decree of Destiny, which applied as well to his beautiful sister, Fanny, the poet, and to Anna, who might have been a scarcely less potent world-power than himself. The shadow of madness—too often, alas! one of the *atrae curae* of human genius—hung heavily over one side of the house, if not over both. Also, Parnell's business in London was one of revolution and was not to be done—was, indeed, to be sorely undone—at dinner tables and in ballrooms. It is worthy of remark that the *triste* idyll (the only one of a lonely life) which was to wreck him and to wreck much besides, had its origin in his declining a woman's invitation to her husband's dinner-table. He evaded the summons, and the lady had a lady's revenge. If she had known, the genial Prince of Wales' persistent efforts to wile the Irish Leader to a discreet dinner-party were no less resolutely evaded. But once entrapped into what is odiously called "a social function," the most modest or the most splendid, his simpleness was beyond all art, and his charm was irresistible. Mere moroseness had nothing to do with his "unsociability." His own social interests and tastes would have made him an ideal clubman—undemonstrative, but in a quiet way affable and *facile à vivre*. He was a batsman of considerable repute in the cricket world, a straight rider, with the Wicklow hounds, a devout seeker after the grouse who was to be found on the mountains earlier than the sun on "the Twelfth," an athlete of the toughest thews and sinews for all his seeming delicacy

of build, the best man at handball and the best man at chess of more than a hundred "suspects" in Kilmainham Prison. If he renounced the world, he did it—to begin with, at all events—as truly for Ireland's sake, as the monk renounces it for God's.

The silliest of all the ignorant legends that have gathered about Parnell's name is that of his scornful masterfulness in dealing with his own lieutenants. The mistake is one that might stand alone as a test of Englishman's pathetic incapacity to understand Ireland. For nobody else could the legend survive a single evening spent with Parnell and "his young barbarians," either in a House of Commons "scrum," or at one of their Bohemian love feasts in the days of their unconquered strength. Of his confidence, Parnell was always chary; to his appreciation and admiration there were no bounds. There were only two of his colleagues—one of them little heard in public—whose advice he sought in emergencies of special difficulty and intimacy. They were selected as inner counsellors, I imagine, because their old relations with the Irish Republican movement made them expert advisers in dealing with these secret forces which were Parnell's besetting anxiety, but whose honesty and unselfishness he always counted to be the main source of his strength. These occult confidences did not at all prevent him from preserving with the remainder of his colleagues, to a greater degree than the leader of any other political party, relations of unaffected cordiality in this or that department of their special aptitudes.

Napoleon was a jealous critic of Moreau for his great victory at Hohenlinden. Jealousy was the last vice that could have jaundiced Parnell's appreciation of his Moreaus. If he for years bore the battle of Obstruction on his single shield, it was because he had then at his side nobody, except, in a narrower sphere of vision, faithful "Joe" Biggar, to practise the

dangerous art, or even to understand its larger purpose. When the Healys and the Sextons began to coruscate around him, rivalling him in skilful handling of the rules of the House, and easily surpassing him in the flight of epigrams and bright javelins of the brain which dazzled the House even while tormenting them, Parnell was so far from envying them their battles of Hohenlinden, he was content—eventually too lazily content—to be a smiling spectator of their prowess and to minister to them their laurels with a lavish hand. Fiction was for him a pack of lies, as silly as the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* for grown men; the world was so full of more interesting truths and interesting men; yet he divined as surely as the most fervent believer in *The Waterside Neighbours* that Justin McCarthy was a great man in his books, as well as a most charming companion outside them, and he gloried in him accordingly. And so it was he foregathered with “Dick” Power, discussing his day with the Curraghmore hounds, or John Redmond and William Corbett debating the prospects of the Aughavanagh “shoot,” or James O’Kelly listening to the fairy tales of the Whitehead torpedo, or James Gilhooly, to whom he would expound a favourite project for turning the Castletownbere harbour to vast Admiralty uses (a project which the Admiralty have since had the good luck to realise in terms of cement forts and great guns).

Between him and one of his first and most useful confidants there arose a divorce, as to which there were grievous faults—or, rather, in truth, misunderstandings—on both sides. How little a part personal uncharity played in this midsaventure an incident which occurred after the misunderstandings had begun to darken, but before they solidified into their settled shape, will perhaps sufficiently attest. When *United Ireland* had only been twelve weeks started, having no conceivable use for money beyond the classic oaten

ration and its modest washing down, I dropped the half of my covenanted salary as Editor and Manager. The effect was to establish my Protean helper, Mr. Healy, my two sub-editors, and myself upon a footing of democratic equality in the matter of pay. Parnell somehow heard of the folly. He did not attempt to reason with myself, but hearing what Mr. Healy's honorarium was, he insisted almost with indignation how monstrously inadequate a pittance it was in the case of a man of Healy's superb gifts. It was his first, and up to the time of "the Split," his last interference in the management of *United Ireland*, and he did not interfere in vain. Another and a still more practised journalist Parnell excluded ruthlessly from his esoteric circle, although in all matters other than Party secrets he readily sunned himself in his genial company. "I tell — as much as is good for him," he once said in reply to a remonstrance of mine. "A newspaper man would rather sell his immortal soul than keep a secret worth blabbing." When I gently reminded him that this was a rather sweeping censure of newspaper men, he laughed it off with the pretty bit of nonsense: "My dear O'Brien, you are not a newspaper man. You are Don Quixote."

Once in a way Parnell was capable of dropping sayings of a slightly acid taste in what he considered to be safe company. How many of the public men of England could survive, if on any one night the members' smokeroom of the House of Commons were, like the proverbial Palace of Truth, forced to yield up its secrets? The sharpest thing I ever heard of a colleague was his too well published "—— is as vain as a peacock." The addendum "and has as little brain" was not in the least in his taste and was never spoken. The description of the same gentleman, so often attributed to him, "a melancholy humbug," was an editorial gibe in *The Freeman's Journal*, and was not at all of Parnell's manufacture. It may be taken as a

decisive proof that no political leader was ever less uncharitable to his friends in his most intimate or his most exasperated moments that a book in which his most secret thoughts and writings were pitilessly laid bare, and which would assuredly not have suppressed the bitterest allusions to the members of his Party, does at least this justice to his memory that it does not contain more than two or three ill-natured sentences concerning any of his colleagues, and even these not of a heinousness to be reproached to anybody except the angels. It was a more severe test than the average garden politician of any party could stand.

With Michael Davitt he was sometimes vexed, but always, as the American girl would put it, "sweet." Davitt used to relate with glee his story of the question to Parnell: "Suppose you had your Irish Parliament how would you begin?" and the smiling reply: "Well, Davitt, I think I should begin by locking you up." Nobody knew better than Davitt that, if locked up he were to be, it would be in an earthly Paradise compared with which even the Ballybrack cottage of his married life would be a place of punishment. To a similar question of my own as to what he would first do, if an Irish Parliament were assembling, Parnell answered in his peculiar vein of merry irony: "Don't you think, O'Brien, that would be a capital opportunity to retire from Irish politics?" Quite otherwise I have heard him many a time broach his own bold programme of national Reconstruction for the first twenty years of an Irish Parliament, and he would add: "I daresay the boys would think me a dreadfully prosy person. By all means, the youngsters must have their try at the Millennium, but I should as soon propose to separate men's souls from their bodies as to feed the country upon a diet of poetry unmixed."

The blackest of accusation in later years was Parnell's insolent ambition to fill Irish seats with his own

creatures. The charge was never made when the Party was at its noonday height, for the good reason that the constituencies were then more indebted to the sort of men who consented to serve them than the members were to the constituencies who asked them to walk as on hot ploughshares for Ireland. The mean suggestion only came long after with Treasury salaries and the messes of Treasury patronage which made a seat in Parliament a prize that sordid village ambition might intrigue for. The Party of the Parliament of 1882-5, and indeed, for some years after, was one for which Parnell had rather to beg for recruits than to force them on the constituencies. The despairing telegram from Kerry : " We'll elect a broomstick if you'll give it a name," gave the true key to the situation. There never was a leader who spread his nets wider or had fewer minions. Once when, at a Tipperary Convention, Mr. John O'Connor, who was recommended by Mr. Healy, as the spokesman of the Party, was rejected in the fury of a local war-dance, Parnell summoned a second Convention to reconsider the decision, but regarded the emergency with so much detachment that, for all the telegrams from Harrington and myself, urging him to preside, we searched the Kingstown and the North Wall boats in vain for any trace of his arrival. When we ran him down at last at Morrison's Hotel late on the night before the Convention, he inquired for the hours of the trains to Thurles the next morning, and when he learned there were two opted for the later one. When I remonstrated and urged that the local commotion was so intense I should have very much preferred he was already in Thurles when we were speaking, the man's life was written in the smiling answer : " Good gracious, O'Brien, you *are* an extreme man ! " He had little difficulty in getting the local hotheads to see that Mr. O'Connor would be the wiser nomination ; but, so far as any personal preference of his own was

concerned, Mr. John O'Connor "a yellow primrose was to him and nothing more." Some years later, upon a vacancy for Mid-Tipperary, a Convention for the choice of a candidate was summoned, but up to the eve of the Convention no candidate was to be found. I chanced upon Parnell in the Lobby of the House of Commons and pressed him to take action. He said he had written to the Archbishop of Cashel, who had no candidate to suggest, and he knew of no suitable man himself. What did I suggest? By a happy accident, Henry Harrison, a University stripling who had just been bearing a gallant part in the eviction struggles in Donegal and in the resulting prosecutions, caught my eye at the moment, as he was chatting over his experiences in a distant corner of the Lobby. Why not that fine young fellow, if no local man was offering? "Ah!" was Parnell's ready response: "Would you mind introducing me?" And before a week was over young Harrison was the member for Mid-Tipperary and a very high-hearted one at that. Such was the passion of this autocrat for garrisoning the Party with his own nominees. "The Party" he regarded wholly from the point of view of its efficiency for the country's service, and by a rough and ready process of natural selection the fittest men somehow gravitated to its ranks. It was not until politics became a means of livelihood that the political boss and the "local man with a long-tailed family" found it worth while to capture the machinery of election and to bring Parnell's incomparable engine of Parliamentary achievement to ruin.

II—THE STATESMAN

The strangest of all the delusions about Parnell was one amazingly rife at the time of the " Split," that he was a greatly over-rated leader, a *fainéant* who sucked the brains of his abler lieutenants. The present writer was much keelhailed at that crisis for suggesting that Parnell would be missed for many a calamitous year. From some passages of a letter to the Archbishop of Cashel from Boulogne (12th January, 1891), which will be found in the Postscript to the present volume, may be gleaned the kind of message I strove to convey to my countrymen when Parnell's opponents were plied with frenzied assurances that the struggle was already over and that the destruction of Parnell's leadership was a good riddance for Ireland.

It is the keelhaulers whom Time, after bitter experience, has keelhailed in their turn. The cry was that the brilliant " Party " would at long last come to its own when he was gone. " A bubble and a squeak and all is over," was the cheerful summary of the situation by the principal organ of the English Liberal Party, and the war cry was noisily caught up in Ireland. Thirty years have gone and no doubt " all is over "—with the Parties, English and Irish, which compassed his destruction. *Mo náire !* all is not over, even yet, with the anarchy into which the disappearance of Alexander plunged his luckless generals and their country.

Men who did not penetrate beneath the surface of affairs were led by Parnell's absence from the struggle to rekindle the courage of his country after the depression of the collapse of the Land League and the Phoenix Park murders to conclude, that the " retire-

ment into winter quarters " which he himself subsequently avowed had commenced already. This would be the shallowest of misjudgments. If his mouth was shut in Ireland during the long agony of the Spencer Coercion tragedy when public liberty was at the mercy of the newspaper-suppressors, the jury-packers, the official organisers of crime, the unspeakable scoundrels who really pulled the strings of Government—if he seemed to look on from afar at the uneven wrestle with the Goliaths of Dublin Castle, at the risky treasonous protests against the exploitation of the Prince's visit, at the Orange conspiracy to exclude Nationalism from Ulster by organised murder, or the still more unscrupulous scheme at Rome to turn the very religion of the Irish people into an instrument of English rule—it was because Parnell's genius as a leader was not sentimental, but positive, in the French sense of the term. He coldly—and, without doubt, wisely—judged that he must not be caught going to jail again without some supremely good cause, and knew that he could trust the necessary semi-civil war to the men who had the desperate business in hands. He calculated aright. His lieutenants no more thought of resenting his sparing himself for the future than modern corps commanders of reproaching a Marshal Foch with poring over maps in some back billet many a mile behind the firing line, instead of sharing the comparatively trivial risks of the trenches. In their most exultant hour they were as ready as the soldiers of Owen Roe O'Neill to cry, " Sure, we never won a battle—'twas Owen won them all ! "

In recent days both those who call themselves constitutionalists and those who would not object to be described as " anti-constitutionalists " claim with equal persistency that they are following in the footsteps of Parnell. Both are equally astray in their claim. Parnell's policy was neither " constitutional "

nor "unconstitutional," but a judicious combination of the two. As this book proves, the morality of an alliance with the Russia of the Perjdel days, and of an alliance with English Whigs or Tories was equally indisputable in his eyes, as the one or the other was for the moment the best weapon at Ireland's hand. "Policy," "Party," or "methods"—"old" or new—were not ends in themselves, but varying and shifting conditions towards the one paramount end—which was the happiness of a free Ireland, and not merely of Ireland the poetical abstraction, but of the concrete men and women of Ireland as they live and move in a common country delimited by God's own hand. Whatever is best for Ireland at a given time—be it "moderate" or "extreme"—is best for her Statesmen. That was his supreme moral and constitutional test, and although right or wrong did not change, methods did, as inevitably as did the generations of men or their weapons from the stone hatchets to the latest thing in big guns.

The men in glowing youth, for example, who persuade themselves they are but following where Parnell led, when they will hear of nothing short of encountering England in arms, and abandoning unconditionally and once for all Ireland's grip upon the Westminster Parliament, would only have to know the man or to study his words and deeds to discover that they have only got hold of half the truth. His oft-quoted axiom that "no man can set bounds to the march of a nation" is one of the obvious truisms of all nations and of all times. He asserted, as he felt, Ireland's plenary rights as a nation, but implied no less surely "a march of the nation" from the actual to the ideal which could be hastened or impeded as the existing generation exercised their understanding and descried their duty aright. He troubled himself not at all with any pretension of England to mark out boundaries to the evolution of the Irish Nation; it was for him a question

not of what Ireland "would," but what Ireland "could," in one generation's short day and according to her lights and her opportunities for the moment. Pedants' or poets' disputations on the subject did not concern him. He would have accepted a great Frenchman's definition of a Nation "as a soul and a spiritual principle, the resultant of a long historic past of sacrifices and efforts made in common and of a united will and aspirations in the present." But he would have wasted no words, when the fact was sufficient. In the Home Rule debates, he cut short a pompous argument to prove that Ireland never had been a nation and never could be a nation, with the thrilling cry: "*She is a nation!*" The fact was not to be argued with. It proved itself. His business was to realise, not to prate, and for living men, not for a hazy perfectibility.

The seasoned politicians who have set up the counterflag of a "constitutionalism" based wholly upon speeches and wirepulling in Westminster and have developed a sensitive shrinking from any "unconstitutional" procedure in Ireland have much less excuse for claiming an apostolic succession to Parnell in their own feeble-witted programme. Only two of them knew Parnell in person, but the more important of the two began public life as a disciple of a physical-force man so uncompromising as John Mitchel, and put himself at the head of the semi-revolt of "the Kilmainham Party" in 1881 against Parnell for even his very qualified dependence upon the Westminster Parliamentarianism against which none but lunatics and Bolsheviks must now breathe an irreverent word. For constitutionalists of this new rite Parnell would have as scant respect as the Catholics of France had for the "constitutional Bishops" of the Revolution. Indeed, it may safely be affirmed that Mr. Dillon would have been hooted off any platform of the Land League had he in those days uttered the ultra-"constitutional"

doctrines of his latter-day campaign against *Sinn Féin*.¹ The two master-keys to Parnell's success were Obstruction in Parliament and Boycotting in Ireland. Both were frankly "unconstitutional," both were violently abused at the start, and both have imposed themselves on the world—Parliamentary Obstruction as the unbloody weapon of every minority struggling to be free, and Boycotting in substitution for armaments as the real sanction of President Wilson's League of Nations.

"How is a man to learn the rules of the House of Commons?" asked one of Parnell's recruits. "By breaking them," was the answer. No disguise was ever made of the foundational tenet of Irish agitation, that the only way of winning good laws was by breaking bad ones. I have talked these matters over with Parnell countless times, and he was always the same at the roots. To be "constitutional" the first postulate is a Constitution, and Ireland had none. We had, therefore, no moral obligation towards England except to hit her. With what weapon, was not a matter for England, but for ourselves, to settle. With Washington's weapons if Ireland were a wide continent and England three thousand miles away, but the facts being otherwise, with whatever less heroic weapons were at hand. On the other side of the account, he practised Obstruction not at all, as perhaps Biggar largely did, for the joyous impishness of the thing, but with a very far-drawn purpose. Nor did he countenance Boycotting without a keen disgust for its sordid side. They were the latest things in war inventions, and war-inventions do not tend to become more nicely humane. He held by Butt's Federalism, and at the

¹ The only claim I ever heard from a Land League platform to the "constitutional" character now hysterically arrogated to themselves by Parliamentarians of the later school was one which used to cause Parnell and ourselves a good deal of merry comment. The speaker was P. J. Sheridan, of Tobercurry, and his words were: "We'll give the landlords what they got from the French

last by Grattan's Parliament, rather than by an Irish Republic. But without believing any of the three to possess any heaven-bestowed sanctifying grace of its own, which should exclude either of the others in imaginable contingencies.

Politics was not an infallible revelation, nor even a science, but a high game of skill with a people's happiness for the stake. It was a matter of partly divination, partly guesswork—conditioned always by the axiom that principle must not be sacrificed to the expediency of the scheming politician. He regarded any pretension to set up this or that particular way of freeing Ireland as a divine dogma with contempt. In one age Irish patriotism took the form of fighting for a Stuart king, in another of Grattan's sublime conception of a commingling of the Protestant Colonists and the Catholic Gaels in a common nation. Then came the French Revolution, and Wolfe Tone and Emmet rightly strove to turn it to account (Emmet's plan, wild as it seemed, for going straight to the heart of English rule by beginning with an attack on Dublin Castle always won Parnell's homage). Then followed O'Connell's galvanism of the dead body of the nation,—by dull processes of speech-making and blarney, no doubt, but still a wondrous performance, which first gave the power of organised agitation to the world; and then the flash of ideal splendour from Young Ireland and the magnificent quixotism of the Fenians. They all used the weapons of their day, were they as feeble as bows and arrows or as sharp as pikeheads, and Parnell's sympathy embraced them all with a liberal catholicity of view.

Revolution, and that is twelve feet of rope—*but always in a strictly constitutional manner.*” He had a firm faith that, with this blessed qualification, any programme, no matter how bloodthirsty, was as “constitutional” as Blackstone. It was of Sheridan the remark was made by Pat Egan: “Sheridan would be quite happy to be hanged if he could read the report of the execution in the *Freeman* the next morning.”

And now his own turn came for a new experiment with a Party animated by a new discipline, wielding unsuspected powers in an alien Parliament, and leavened in Ireland by all that remained of Fenian self-sacrifice and aspiration. But Ireland must always be the Mecca. The vitality and health of the movement, the capital fund of deeds, to be coined into words in Westminster, must always lie in Ireland. The Party must only make descents upon England for warlike operations. But therein he discerned treasures and granaries beyond price to be spoiled. "There was an old king of yours—I can never get round the name," he once remarked, "who raided the Romans as far as the Alps, and it was only a chance stroke of lightning that killed him. This place" (the House of Commons) "is better than England's Alps; it is her Rome; this is where our boys can raid her Holy of Holies and get spoils worth some broken bones to take back."

Such were King Dathi and his men in their Alpine days.

The Irish Party was then in the morning freshness of its powers, its beliefs as firm as Sinai, and its illusions unprofaned. Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton were the most brilliant figures in the Parliamentary tournaments. People were incessantly contrasting them with one another, in the absurd Plutarch way, to their mutual embarrassment and ultimate estrangement. Totting up their rival "marks" was the more gratuitous that they were the complement of one another's powers, if the two orbs could only have been got to shine in the same debate, as happened with increasing rarity. Mr. Sexton was the expositor rather than the man of action. His phrasing was perfect. The sentences rolled out ready-minted from his brain as finished as newly-struck gold coins. He was eminently in the jargon of the Lobbies "a Second Reading man"—large in his view of principles, slow-moving,

and sometimes almost stately in language, as reliable as a blue-book in mastery of his facts; unluckily, he was not so much a master of figures as figures were the master of him, and, with a temper apt to grow more and more peevish, there was a certain failure to come to the point for which even the splendid procession of his sonorous sentences could not make up. Quite otherwise, Mr. Healy must follow somebody—and the more formidable the better—to be at his best in debate. For the sublimer things of eloquence—for the elaborately stated general principle, the measured examination of some vast scheme of statesmanship in its full proportions—he professed a contempt greater than perhaps he felt. He even dreaded to address a large audience, although the news that he was on his legs almost invariably collected them. It was often at some unexpected point in Committee that he would swoop down like a Captain of guerillas from his mountains—in those days often ferocious enough to seem a redman with his tomahawk in the eyes of those who knew him not—but in more citizen times quite as apt to burst out in some unlooked-for fit of *bon-diablerie* or pathos—dispensing now his sarcasms, now his compliments, here and there and everywhere as unaccountably as shooting stars, the terror of Ministers in charge of a Bill, the delight of everybody for the moment spared from his scalpel, but all the time holding fast to his point with a grip that never relaxed, and sometimes when it was least looked for—perhaps upon some trumpery amendment in a half-sleepy Committee—flaming out into a blaze of patriotic emotion, half fury, half tears, which swept all before it with the impetuosity of an Irish clan rushing to the battle. In a House that heard Chatham and Burke and Gladstone, Healy's individuality will live with an originality little inferior to the most famous of those who went before him. His judgment was often doubted; his genius never.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor was another Parliamentary wrestler of the first rank, whenever he could tear himself from those daring newspaper enterprises of his own—always beginning with exiguous ways and means and nearly always breeding capital and influence of startling amount—which were his principal occupation. He sacrificed his House of Commons reputation cheerfully in the common cause, speaking without a minute for preparation and from bottomless depths of ignorance. He would drop in while we were locked in conflict with Trevelyan upon some complicated Irish controversy, and leaning over from his bench would question Harrington or myself, who were supposed to be arsenals of the facts in Irish matters, for some inkling of what it was all about, and then as soon as the painstaking Chief Secretary sat down would spring up to club him with ready-made passion and with the assurance of one who had burnt the midnight hour in studying the facts in all their ramifications. John Redmond could seldom be induced to interfere in this rough-and-tumble war *en petits paquets*, but whenever he did so interfered with grace. His comparative uselessness where the blows were flying was partly due to the fact that the weapons wanted in such a warfare were not orations, but what were prosily called “a few words,” (though hot ones), and may also, I think, be attributed partly to a diffidence which genuinely led him to the belief that his brother Willie was the greater orator of the two. Biggar, also, was still in the prime of his riotous enjoyment of Obstruction. He knew not fear and within that quaint Covenanting brain of his possessed incredible resources for the torture of the enemy ; but he was himself the last person he desired to listen to, and so long as there was anybody else to play the toreador he looked on with utter self-effacement and clucked out his content with the benevolence of a matronly hen watching the performances of her chicks.

Such men were, take them for all in all, a merry company in field or camp ; they were long abominated by Englishmen, but neither they nor the race that produced them were ever despised.

Parnell towered amongst his marshals, an undisputed and beloved First Consul. But the most modest of potentates ; a strong hand certainly, but a gentle and cordial one. Although it was by a happy chance, rather than by any deliberate choice of his own his chief officers came together, his was the magnetism that held them together, and his the generous encouragement of initiatives that multiplied the activities at his command. The least noisy member of the orchestra himself, he was the Maestro without whose eye the fiddles and reeds would soon end in discords. He never by choice took the *beau rôle* of rising on advertised occasions to move sensational amendments before an expectant House. His most impressive speeches were made in some quiet corner of a debate when his hearers were few, but were of those who counted. It took the House several years to understand the secret of why they listened to him at all. He never catered to their taste either for amusement or for a thrill. His thoughts were turned over a hundred times in his mind, before in some unexpected moment they escaped his lips ; but for the words he had no care and no preparation. I never saw him use a written note. All was without colour or pretension. He seldom used an adjective, and seldomer still a superlative. The general body of his discourse was as passionless as readings from the Liturgy, yet without a trace of preconcerted solemnity. Only there was ever in the midst of the sober self-restraint some flash of burning passion which lighted up all the rest as the lightning does a starless night. Some phrase, commonplace enough in form, but with a soul of fire in it—like his celebrated trumpet-note to the famine-stricken Western peasants : “ Keep a firm grip of your

homesteads ! ”—was of the kind that makes history, in Parliament and in nations, after the most iridescent fireworks of Parliamentary repartee have lost their glow even in the next morning’s newspapers.

Parnell had no fads, and scarcely any preferences, as to methods. So long as the old mad Rules or rulelessness made it still possible for Joe Biggar to turn the Prince of Wales out of his seat over the clock to entertain some Irish lady friends of his, Parnell devoted himself to the Plutonic mysteries of Obstruction with the fanaticism of a man of one idea. But no sooner was that diamond mine worked out, and Joe Biggar forced to look for other entertainment, his great master or (as some thought at the time) pupil in Obstruction turned with no less complacency to the utilisation of the stupendous popular forces precipitated, as the chemists say, by the Land League of Devoy and Davitt. When the Land League’s sentence of death came, he turned to the No Rent Manifesto. When that in turn had run its day, he calmly addressed himself to negotiations with his jailors and by his “ Kilmainham Treaty ” emerged with the most amazing paper of concessions ever wrung from an Imperial Government by its prisoner—concessions which, but for the tragedy in the Phoenix Park, must have blossomed into Home Rule a generation ago. Those who found in “ the Kilmainham Treaty ” a capitulation rather than a triumph would have repented in sackcloth and ashes had they only been aware of the state of facts in which Parnell had to work his miracle. When the Phoenix Park tragedy hurled him from the heights Sisyphus set himself doggedly although with a heavy heart to roll up the stone again from the bottom. The field of active conflict with the law in Ireland, he had the candour to own, was closed to him, as had been the field of conflict with the rules of Parliament. He satisfied himself that the work of prolonging in Ireland the deathless war with the oppressor—for the moment the most urgent, indeed the indispensable—

might safely be left to younger or more fire-eyed enthusiasts. He himself soared placidly away to his eyrie on the cedar-top at Westminster to await his luck, and it soon came in the Household Suffrage Bill of 1884, which had only to be extended to the "mud cabin vote" in Ireland, as he speedily made sure it must, to revolutionise the situation from top to bottom and deprive England of any pretence of an alternative between governing Ireland as a Crown Colony or yielding to the all but unanimous claim of her representatives. Opportunism, all the purists who refuse to let their foot rest on this too, too solid earth will say; but the opportunism not of the knavish politician, but of the patriot of genius who seizes the propitious hour for an advance for his disarmed nation, making quite sure it is an advance in the direction of further advances, whenever the next propitious moment arrives. The old Gaelic proverb—"If you are weak, it is no harm to be cunning"—is of the essence of wisdom for a nation that cannot choose its weapons, and Parnell never offered any excuses for practising it.

He never broke off what we would now call wireless communication with the front in Ireland. He wrote a sage public letter on the occasion of the Prince's visit, and another when the Orange fire-eaters undertook to keep the Household Suffrage Act out of Ulster with their revolvers. It was a striking instance of his loyalty as a leader that he publicly championed *United Ireland* in the House of Commons, at a moment when its fortunes might well have seemed desperate, and when, as we now know, he must have felt uneasy twitches lest the denunciations of Dublin Castle might have their repercussion. His only appearance in person in Ireland was a singular one. In his speech at the Dublin Banquet where he was presented with the National Tribute of £40,000, what smaller souls regarded almost as an insult characteristic of the man was the odd circumstance that Parnell forgot to make

any reference, direct or even remote, to the cheque for £40,000 he had just been handed. Critics who looked deeper might find a nobler significance in the fact that the subject had been jostled out of his mind by his absorption in the superior exigencies of a speech intended to brace the country up for a long ordeal of suffering to be tranquilly borne in his absence, and, to his far-seeing gaze, to be magnificently rewarded.

That reward had now come in Sir Henry James' Household Suffrage Act, and he bent all his Parliamentary skill and energy to defeating any attempt to exclude Ireland from the totality of its enfranchisement. Thenceforth he lay in wait with the patience of an Indian chief on the warpath for the fall of the Government, and with it the end of the suppression of public liberty by a Crimes Act which was itself the worst of crimes, to be followed by a General Election and the establishment of Home Rule as an impregnable constitutional demand. The fall, by a usual experience in the House of Commons, came when next to nobody except Parnell himself expected it. The division was upon an increased Whiskey and Beer Duty. Some of our unfortunate colleagues who had been routed out of their beds in Ireland by imperative telegrams from Parnell found it hard to stifle their temptation to strong language when they arrived in a House in a state of boredom bordering upon coma. Even while members were passing through the voting lobbies, it was with the torpid air of men who had been passing through dozens of similar divisions ending in flatulence and futility. It was not until it began to be seen that the Tories and the Irishmen were still coming through the turnstiles, after the Ministerial lobby was exhausted, that the first signs of incredulity changed to a hush of awe, and then the House which a few minutes before was a collection of bores and bored became a mass of screaming, gesticulating, raving lunatics, as the Clerk at the Table placed the winning numbers in the hands of the Opposition tellers. Lord Randolph

Churchill, who sat in front of us at the corner below the gangway as usual, with the faithful Balfour, Wolff and Gorst, sprang on the green bench and from that elevation waved his silk hat around his head with the yells of a wild animal fastening his teeth upon his prey. If he had turned around to kiss us, or had stood upon his head on the floor, his Irish allies would scarcely have found the demonstration an extravagant one. For, if to this ambitious English youngster it was the cry of "Checkmate!" in a royal game for the mastery of an Empire, it was for us the end of an all but insufferable agony, the reward of three years of vigils, risks, and seemingly hopeless resistances without a break, the downfall of our torturers, the bliss of a first entry into Heaven for our nation.

Parnell's way of enjoying the victory as contrasted with Churchill's is worth recording. In an interview he gave me the next morning for *United Ireland*, there was no jumping on benches or hat-waving, but in reply to the question: "What advantage do you hope to reap from last night's vote?" this sober answer:

"Well, in the first place, the pleasure and advantage of that vote to us is increased by the fact that we have saved almost the only remaining Irish industry from a permanent burden of £500,000 a year."

It was not, we may be sure, that the Irish leader was more stupid than the rest of the world who were all agog that morning at the fall of a great Ministry, the dismissal of Spencer, the deathblow of Coercion, the opening up of epoch-making possibilities for Irish Nationality. It was that, in the first place, it was not in his way to boast, and that, in the next place, he was possessed of a financial realism—an almost humorous passion for a small saving—which would have made him an incomparable Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer. The National Tribute was repaid fourteen times over at a stroke and was to be repaid again every succeeding year, and this was but the *hors d'œuvre* of a Gargantuan feast of victory for his people.

CHAPTER V

A BRAVE EXPERIMENT (1885)

We have now arrived at a stage at which Parnell's strategy of playing off one English party against another can be luminously seen at work. It was "vigour beyond the law" in Ireland—sheer lawlessness, if you will—that overthrew Spencer, as it overthrew Forster before him; but it was at Westminster Parnell now proceeded to turn his raw material from Ireland to account for a more permanent purpose. Chamberlain, who had been himself the Friar Joseph, "the grey cardinal" of the Kilmainham Treaty, had some spiteful things to say of "The Maamtrasna Alliance" which brought the Tories into office—"The Maamtrasna Alliance" being that under which conscientious Tory lawyers like Sir Edward Clarke, and not quite so conscientious Tory politicians like Lord Randolph Churchill and his Fourth Party, collaborated with us in inveighing against the denial of justice even to friendless Connacht peasants—and also, no doubt, incidentally in "dishing the Whigs." Such recriminations might carry their reproach for English Party politicians, but could only make the Irish leader smile, if he were not too polite to betray any sign of his satisfaction. For equal and impartial independence as between both English Parties—a cold-blooded readiness to co-operate with or to chastise either the one or the other according to their deserts for the moment—was the master-key of his policy, as the abandonment of that impartiality was in

after years to prove the death-warrant of the great Party which owed its creation to him.

This intellectual indifference as between Whigs and Tories has always been one of the puzzles of Irish psychology for Englishmen, and as often as not has been attributed to something inconsequent, or even treacherous, in the Irish nature! The good Liberal is conscious to himself of the desire to do for Irishmen (by degrees) everything that can possibly be good for them, and knows not why we should vex the soul of his dear Mr. Gladstone by concerting pranks with an urchin like Randolph to baffle his good intentions. The Tory finds the Irishman delightful in the Army, in the clubs, and in the hunting-field, and cannot imagine what he can find in common with those Puritan Radicals. They have never hit upon the simple explanation that the Irishman is not born either a little Radical or a little Tory—nay, has a good deal in common with both, and no absolute incompatibility with either—but is, in any case, by a decree of nature, a being as different in furniture of mind and soul and aspiration as a Frenchman is from an Englishman. I have known English Liberals who would stop at nothing short of dying for Ireland—even if at that—for whom the best of Irishmen coming out of a Tory Division Lobby had something of the air of a monster. It was when this feeling, whether through good fellowship, or less avowable motives, gained Irish representatives themselves that the decay of Irish Parliamentaryism began.

It will be seen that, as soon as a substantial accommodation with England became practical politics, Parnell accepted the consequences loyally both in his own conduct and in the orientation of the movement. So long as Ireland had no such guarantee, he acknowledged no constitutional limitations, except those of prudence, in his dealings with the two sets of slippery English politicians who, in their greed for

office, were ready either to fawn upon him or rend him as it might best serve their purpose. There is no longer any reason for withholding one piece of evidence how little the pedantries of technical allegiance to England were suffered to stand in the way whenever appeals addressed in vain to her sense of justice were likely to be more successful if addressed to her necessities.

In the early part of 1885, while the reign of repression in Ireland seemed still unshaken, and when the Russian menace to Afghanistan led to preparations for a vast war on the Indian frontier if the Russian advance to Penjdeh were persisted in, Parnell did not hesitate to engage his personal responsibility deeply in an attempt to turn the crisis to account for Ireland. James O'Kelly, who had explored the most intricate subterranean ways of Fenianism in America, and whose romantic relations with the *New York Herald* had given him an astonishingly widespread influence with American politicians, was despatched to the United States to investigate the possibilities of an armed descent upon Ireland in concert with the Russian war plans. The idea was the swift enrolment of five thousand Irish-American veterans of the Civil War, and their sudden concentration upon an American port, where ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet were to await them for embarkation, with a cargo of rifles and light guns. O'Kelly subsequently gave me to understand that no less a personage than General Phil Sheridan, the hero of the Shenandoah Valley, had intimated his willingness to take charge of the expedition, and it was known that a high authority in Washington would take care that there was no indiscreet interference with the departure of the Russian squadron, whose Government were at the time the curled darlings of the American public.

To the present writer was confided the task of communicating on behalf of the Irish leader with the

secret agent of the Czar, then on a mission to London. In a frowsy back drawingroom in Ebury Street, dim enough for a conspirator's cave, I had the honour of a lengthy conversation with the Russian Envoy, who had long been the most distinguished figure in Russia's mysterious operations on the Afghan frontier, and who so far as the heavy blinds and curtains enabled me to see my interlocutor at all, might have been a minor Professor, discussing some curious theory of Greek verse. But his views once formed were expressed with rapidity and quite nettly.

From the Russian point of view there was nothing to object. The ships and the arms could be made available without much difficulty. He anticipated no serious hindrance from the United States' authorities. The raid would serve Russia's purpose well enough (although he added softly, Russia was never in a hurry), and might be the means of stirring up a blaze in India, while the Afghan frontier was being fought over. Whether it would be equally good business for Ireland, he observed with a smile, and, as it struck me, in a tone of unexpected good nature, it was not for him to pronounce. "A raid that could only be a raid is a serious matter for a country so close to England, but I presume your friend has thought of all that, or you wouldn't be here." The sum was, he would find no difficulty in recommending the project to his people, but it could only be on condition of Parnell giving him some guarantee—he suggested his signet-ring—that the design was a serious one, and would be resolutely pursued. Parnell, as it happened, possessed a family signet-ring among the numerous precious stones he was wont at that time to wear on his fingers. His comment on the proposal was characteristic: "None of our family ever had luck that lost a ring," he observed, quite gravely. "Besides, I am advised —— has no rights of extra-territoriality, and in case of war will never be allowed to

leave England. He may escape hanging, but you and I won't. No, he will have to think of something better than my signet-ring, if he is going to best England."

Before I could repeat my visit to Ebury Street, Komaroff's troops were withdrawn from Penjdeh, there was an end of a war which probably Russia never had any notion of allowing to be precipitated, and with it there was an end of our castles in the air. The incident is only worth recalling as an illustration—of which the secret archives of the first Boer War will supply a companion picture still more realistic—of that mixture of daring in extremities with no less daring moderation in hours of victory which was the essence of Parnell's character as a leader. And be not at all too contemptuous of the military inadequacy of the Irish-American expedition. It could not have sufficed to overrun Ireland, but it was Parnell's calculation that taken in connection with gigantic dangers on the Indian frontier a descent on Ireland by dashing Phil Sheridan must quite surely startle Gladstone into some epoch-making proffer of Irish freedom, and few who knew Gladstone and knew Parnell could have much doubt that on such a *Dies iræ* the bargain would have been adventured and would have been perfected. But to return from this interlude of the outlaw side of Parnell's strategy.

The two heaviest calamities that befell the Irish cause in our time—"the Split" of 1890 and the sacrifice of the unprecedented opportunity of an Irish settlement by consent in 1903—arose, the first of them from a tenderness for English Liberalism, approaching to a vice, and the second from a wholly vicious incapacity to collaborate with English Toryism in doing the work of Ireland. Parnell was weakened by no such foible of love or hate in his dealings with Englishmen. Within twelve months, an Irish leader who durst not raise his voice in Ireland a few months previously had

the leaders of both English Parties flattering him with more or less shy approaches to Home Rule, and he encouraged the advances of both of them with consummate skill and without treachery to either, and of the successful competitor constituted a world-apostle of Irish independence. Be it always borne in mind that he had only a couple of dozen even of the Irish members at his back (the rest being palsied place-hunters of the "nominal Home Ruler" type), that the actual balance of power as between English Parties, save by some chance almost as long to be waited for as the blossom of a century plant, hardly entered into his dreams, and no individual worth counting on either Front Bench could yet be got to whisper "Home Rule" except in guilty secrecy. What might have been his achievements, if like his successors in the "Home Rule Parliament" which finally wrecked Home Rule he could command the Division Lobbies and make and unmake Prime Ministers as the interests of Ireland dictated—if in addition to all that he had the entire Liberal Party and far the greater portion of the Tory Party hungering for a great historic agreement with Ireland!

The Spencer *régime* was scarcely a fortnight fallen, when we had Chamberlain proposing his tour in Ireland with Sir Charles Dilke under our auspices to promulgate the proposal of an expansible "National Council," touching which "I would not hesitate to transfer the consideration and solution of the Education question and the Land question entirely to an Irish Board altogether independent of English government influence, which would, of course, be also invested with powers of taxation in Ireland for those strictly Irish purposes." And we had the new Tory Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Carnarvon, making (and meaning) a speech in the House of Lords foreshadowing something very much more majestic in the shape of Irish liberty. The repulse of Chamberlain's essay to

enthroned himself as our National Patron Saint had, perhaps, its drawbacks ; but in the state of irritability then prevailing between the Liberal leaders, it was for us perforce a choice between Gladstone and Chamberlain, and it is easy enough now to understand that, had we elected differently, Ireland must have shambled along obscurely in the train of a Radical Jack Cade, and the Gladstonian Home Rule epos might never have been written. For any damage suffered from Chamberlain's ill-humour we were, at all events, consoled by a speech a week or two later in Leeds by Mr. Herbert Gladstone. The speaker dismissed with contempt the taunt of the party wirepullers that the Irish had sold themselves to the Tories. He recognised Parnell's right and duty to extract the best terms he could for his own country from any and every combination with English parties.

"He told the Tories it was no good half trusting the Irish people. The proper policy was to throw to the wind all coercive legislation and prove their trust in the Irish people by allowing them to manage their own affairs. . . . His point was that for good or ill Mr. Parnell represented the Irish people, and the Tories must settle with him a system of government based entirely upon the people's wishes."

The Leeds speech attracted little notice in England, but, coming from Gladstone's favourite son, was rightly divined by Parnell and his inner counsellors as a first Pythian suggestion that the late Liberal Prime Minister was preparing to soar into heights of Home Rule legislation far above the reach of Chamberlain's municipal imagination, or of the Tory young men's devices to steady the trembling knees of the new Government. Parnell noted the flight of the dove from Hawarden, as of the dove from Birmingham, with interest, but in silence. He was the last to be melted out of his adamant strength in negotiation the moment Englishmen spoke him fair. He had,

besides, a rooted conviction that, so long as the House of Lords survived, it was a Tory Government alone that could bring a Home Rule Bill to fruition. The danger for Ireland was not that the Tory Government could upon any plausible hypothesis come back impregnable, but that the General Election might return a Liberal majority sufficiently sweeping to condemn Ireland for the duration of another Parliament to a renewal of her sickening experiences of the theories of Liberal self-righteousness and the realities of Liberal coercive rule.

Parnell threw for the greatest stake of his life—a semi-attractive, semi-compulsive agglomeration of the two Imperial parties to effect an Irish settlement. The pace was not to be forced with the Tory country gentlemen. Their first timid relations with their Irish supporters were those of prim maiden ladies with wild young men. But before the Tories were seated in power at all, Randolph Churchill had pinned them to the abandonment of Coercion in Ireland, and had, in full view of the House of Commons, kicked Sir Stafford Northcote into the Upper House, and it was a secret of Policinello that as sound a kicking was in store for whoever else should air any antique objections to “the Maamtrasna Alliance.” Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the leader of the House of Commons, if he was less daring, was known to be little less adaptable. The astuter politicians chose for their intermediary with Parnell, in the new Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Carnarvon, a man of much elevation of principle, whose gentleness of temper and breadth of sympathy, if it exposed him to the slings and arrows of more double-dealing colleagues, gave him the distinction of being the first Tory statesman to rise to the conception of a frank recognition of Irish Nationality in its plenitude as the highest glory of Tory policy and a sure bulwark of the Empire in the one vital spot where it was vulnerable. The famous meetings

between the new Viceroy and the Irish leader in an unoccupied house in the West End may imply their own rebuke for the clandestine Tory diplomacy which was infantile enough or roguish enough to resort to them, but, by the sacred verdict of time, will live to the honour of the two men who took part in them. There was no substantial difference between Lord Carnarvon's and Parnell's reports of the interviews between them. They were agreed that no formal bargain had been made, but Lord Carnarvon never disputed Parnell's own conclusion that they parted "in complete accord regarding the main outlines of a settlement conferring upon Ireland a Parliament in name and in fact." Still more significantly the interview was sought by the new Viceroy with the full knowledge of Lord Salisbury, and the particulars of their conversation were communicated by him to the Prime Minister a day or two afterwards without a word of disapproval by the latter. So little scandalised were Lord Carnarvon's craftier colleagues in the Ministry that several months afterwards they dispatched to his assistance in Dublin Colonel Howard Vincent, M.P., but lately the head of the Metropolitan Police, to continue the conversations in the minutest details with Harrington at the headquarters of the National League, and with myself in that tabernacle of treasons, the editorial room of *United Ireland*, and by this time the high designs imparted to Parnell by the Viceroy were evolving into a marked preference for "the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland" plan of Grattan's Parliament, with certain modern adjustments, as contrasted with the prosier system of Federal subordination proposed by Butt. Finally, after these kites had been flying for several months between the Irish Government and the Nationalist leaders, Parnell brought matters to an issue in a speech in which he suggested the Dual Monarchy arrangements of Austria-Hungary as offering the best

available model for the future relations of the two islands. Lord Salisbury himself responded to the challenge in his famous speech at Newport in October 1885 in which, while he professed "not to have seen any plan which gave him *at present*" any ground for anticipating a solution "in that direction," the Tory Prime Minister unmistakeably left an open door for the Grattan Parliament arrangement foreshadowed by his Viceroy and his envoy, and expressed his own very decided conviction that the loyalist minority would find a truer protection under a broad National Legislature than under any paltry scheme of County Government.

It was as far as a Conservative Party, weak in the country and torn with the internal wars of "the old gang," and the new, could be expected to go—further indeed than Gladstone had yet gone or was ever to go—and Parnell flung the full weight of his sword into the Tory battle at the polls. He issued an address to the Irish of Great Britain, pressing upon them the immeasurable advantages that must accrue to the Irish Cause from a united vote for the Tories. Had his exhortation been generally obeyed, a Tory majority, however narrow, must have been insured by the turning over of dozens of the great manufacturing towns in the North of England and the Clyde Valley, and a Tory majority once elected—all the more desirable by reason of its modesty—with an Irish Party trebled in strength to support (and watch) them, a complaisant House of Lords, and a Liberal Party constrained by every obligation of honour and decency to second a great Irish policy of appeasement, might have been in a position—God knoweth!—to turn into the joyous resurrection of a nation a quarter of a century spent in exasperating the quarrel with new legacies of duplicity on the one side and on the other a too ready trust in English promises for ever betrayed.

It was not to be. Michael Davitt, who had already

publicly dissented from the policy of refusing Chamberlain a national welcome to Ireland, now traversed the hustings of Great Britain to cry out against the imagined sale of the Irish vote to the Tories. Rejecting every entreaty to enter Parliament himself, his fanatical devotion to the interests of the British Democracy led him to run counter to the plans of his own country's representatives to turn the Parliamentary situation to the best profit for Ireland. His wayward genius had an easy success with the inflammable population of the Clyde and the Scottish mining regions which have since given to British Socialism the crack regiments of its Church Militant. The Irishmen of Manchester stood as true as in the Manchester Martyrs' day, but those of other great industrial towns of the North of England, which were once the strong right arm of Fenianism, had either taken Labour for their political god, or were already dominated by the Radical tradition which had come down from O'Connell's Lichfield House Compact with the Whigs, and during the subsequent years of close association with Radical local politics under the tutelage of Mr. T. P. O'Connor had little left except an Irish accent to distinguish them from the official English party organisation.

Parnell's bold cast to build a million Irish voters in Britain into a gigantic machine of war to be thrown on this side or on that, with a supreme disregard for merely English party interests, met with a comparative defeat. The Tory Government came back with little more to choose than how they were to die. Nobody more freely than Parnell accepted the fortunes of war. Having fallen short on his own side of the bargain, he was not scandalised at all that the beaten Tories should make no more Newport speeches and should select a new Irish Coercion Bill on which to fall. Political profligacy, however, has bounds which are not to be passed without becoming a crime. Lord

Randolph Churchill telling Justin McCarthy when the electoral results were known: "I did my best for you and now I'll do my best against you," and setting forth with the war-song of "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right," to plunge his firebrand into the gunpowder of an Orange bigotry and ignorance he in his soul detested—and all because twenty or thirty English constituencies had failed to come up to the calculations of the wire-pullers—makes a sufficiently revolting picture in the eye of honest history; but even the apology of youth and levity could not be pleaded for a more pretentious transgressor when Lord Salisbury, who had dangled Hungarian Independence before Ireland's eyes when the Irish vote was still to be sought, repaired his political misfortunes by undertaking by means of twenty years of ruthless Coercion to exterminate his ex-Irish allies as a nation of Hottentots. On the eve of the General Election of 1885, all the considerable men of both parties, Liberal and Tory, had declared for Home Rule, if politicians' dealings with the most sacred concerns of nations are not to be accounted as false as dicers' oaths. A generation of men have since lived and died, and Ireland's trustfulness has been foully betrayed by all English Ministries and parties in turn—by the Chamberlain of his post-Radical days who turned his proposed tour to Ireland as our National Apostle into a felonious raid on Belfast as an organiser of civil war, as well as by the Salisburys and Churchills whose electoral gamble of 1885 miscarried, and—perhaps most inexcusably of all—by the imbecility—let us yet not say perfidy—of of an irresistible Home Rule Ministry installed specially in power to complete Gladstone's work, and to the hour of its inglorious death effecting nothing but the transmutation of Ireland's hopes to ashes.

Prate of the wild unreason of Easter Week insurrections!—to the new generation whose hot eyes peruse the story, the unending trickery, insincerity,

incompetence, or downright treachery of English politicians of all parties in bedevilling a national claim of which their chief men were agreed a quarter of a century ago in recognising the justice, might well inspire a more ineradicable hatred of the English name than the worst Elizabethan and Cromwellian atrocities which were the deeds of brutal, but at least of barbarously ignorant, Englishmen. Those of us who have fretted thankless years out in the search for peace with England will find any reproof of the impatience of our young countrymen with "Parliamentarianism" perish on our lips.

One Abdiel of shining fidelity survived among the faithless. Lord Carnarvon left Ireland as he had entered it, a stainless gentleman, and like the Liberal Lord Lieutenant who preceded him, an unfaltering Home Ruler for all his days. It is curious to observe that the Prime Minister who disowned Lord Carnarvon's offers to the Irish leader, but shabbily postponed the disclaimer until his own "Dual Monarchy" bid for the Irish vote had been snowed under by the electorate, was the same Lord Salisbury who, twenty years later, disowned another great Tory scheme of conciliation in Ireland, and allowed its author, George Wyndham, to devote himself to political self-slaughter rather than quote the secret code message from his unscrupulous chief which would have been his justification. It may well be one of history's revenges to remember the work of Carnarvon and Wyndham in Ireland to the high honour of the Tory party when Salisbury's own record of gilded insignificance is forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

TREMBLING IN THE BALANCE

(1885-6)

In Ireland, Parnell's success was complete. "The Nominal Home Rulers" disappeared to a man, never to raise their heads again. The Ulster landlords who had vowed to "drive us south of the Boyne" at the muzzles of their revolvers found themselves in a minority in their own province. More than one of us who, twelve months before, could only enter Ulster at the peril of our lives to hold a Franchise meeting, and were obliged to make our speeches to the crack of hundreds of revolver shots, where the cheers or groans of less emphatic electioneering campaigns would come in, were elected by Protestant votes for constituencies in the heart of the province.¹ When

¹ How amazing seemed my own success in South Tyrone against the Orange candidate, Hon. Somerset Maxwell, may be gauged from the letter I received from my own old well-beloved pastor of Mallow, Bishop MacCarthy of Cloyne :

"Bishop's House, Queenstown,
"December 8, '85.

"My dear Mr. O'Brien,

"I was on the point of calling you by the old familiar name of William until I remembered the proud and honourable position you have achieved for yourself since I thus addressed you—a position which demands a more respectful style of address even from a Bishop.

"As your old pastor and one who still rejoices in the success achieved by every Mallow man, I write to congratulate you most heartily and sincerely on the splendid triumph you have achieved in your recent almost hopeless contest with Northern bigotry and ascendancy—a triumph the most signal that has been won since

all was over Parnell was at the head of a party of eighty-six, composed of men in the prime of life, each of them a trusted chief in his own region, possessed of a surprising average of capacity, if not for the subtleties of Parliamentary cut-and-thrust, for the more serviceable warfare against local oppressors; bound by a written pledge to act with the unity of soldiers forming squares, and by the still closer bond

the commencement of these elections, and won, too, by the ability, the energy, the eloquence, and the tact you exhibited during the entire of this exciting contest.

"I shall only say in conclusion that few rejoice more than I do in the victory you have gained, both for your own sake and the benefit it is calculated to confer on our common country.

"Yours most sincerely,

"+ JOHN MACCARTHY, Bishop of Cloyne.

"William O'Brien, Esq., M.P., Office of *United Ireland*, Dublin."

The following letter, received about the same time from Mrs. Delia T. S. Parnell, the mother of the Irish leader, and one of the least inflammable of observers, gives some indication of how the position then attained in Ireland struck an acute American critic:

"Avondale, Rathdrum,

"Sunday.

"Dear Mr. O'Brien,

"I cannot say how much I regret having at the last moment missed your kind visit. You all seem so overburdened with work, the work you are doing seems so gigantic and efficacious, I shall bear back with me to the United States an almost incredible account of wonders undertaken and executed, which place our paltry pecuniary assistance thence on an exceedingly small and mean footing—our exertions and oratory nowhere. The solid work done, the mountains lifted, the fires of hope lighted even in the heart of Ulster, put any discontent on our side to shame. How you all had patience with the mistakes, and the assumptions and attempted dictations beyond the herring pond is my increasing wonder. I can only say your virtues and abilities stamp you all as fitted for a superhuman mission as *salvatores hominum*. I hope you can find time to take a rest—I cannot add diversion—by paying a weak and suffering old woman a visit at Avondale. Pray let me know when you can come. I hope it may be very soon.

"Sincerely yours,

"DELIA T. S. PARNELL."

of an unselfishness as splendid as may consist with human clay and by a passionate belief in their leader. The most notable recruit of the new party was Mr. John Dillon. The Spencer Coercion *régime* was overthrown on June 13th, and on July 4th Mr. Dillon returned to Ireland, after three years absence, and henceforth refused to be beguiled back to his old attitude of critical suspicion of the Parliamentary Party.

If Parnell's appeal to the Irish vote in Britain failed to give the Tories a majority, it was entirely successful in giving him the next best thing, which was to place the fortunes of the Liberal Party in his keeping. The Liberal majority as against the Tories was eighty-six, but that was precisely the number of Nationalist votes which would enable him to keep both English parties on an equality. It was not enough for any immediate victory, but for a man of Parnell's bent it was sufficient to go on with in order both to extinguish the Tory Government, once its Home Rule plans were dropped, and to make sure that those plans or better ones must be taken up by the Liberals. How far-seeing was his sagacity in giving the Tories the first chance, no student of Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone* can now fail to see. The whole autumn before the Dissolution while the Tory Lord Lieutenant was a convinced Home Ruler and Lord Salisbury making signals of his own openness to the sanctifying grace of conversion, we see the Liberal ex-Premier not only arrived at the Rubicon of Home Rule himself, but as well convinced as Parnell that a Tory Ministry was the surest, if not the only, instrument of an Irish settlement, and in his famous talks at Eaton with the less effusive Mr. Balfour boldly promising Lord Salisbury the collaboration of the Liberal Party if he embarked in the great enterprise. In a game in which factious interests were disgracefully active and idealism abandoned to the chilly custody of the Party Whips, how far the arts of the Old Parliamentary

Hand may have prompted the proposal to the Tories cannot now be too nicely gauged. Gladstone was already threatened with a double schism in his own ranks—from the great Whig wing by Lord Hartington and from the Radicals of Chamberlain's Unauthorised Programme on the other extreme—if the Home Rule schemes he tentatively foreshadowed to them should go further ; and there would be obvious advantages if a Tory Ministry could be persuaded to take the first plunge. One clear point of light shines out, however, from amidst the ocean of mean party passions on which the fate of Ireland was tossing. Let election-eering take what shifty course it might, the old man's determination was steadily solidifying that, hit or miss, win Tory or win Liberal, be the end the triumph of his own Party or its disruption, all else must give way before Ireland's claim to freedom, and no matter how the snows of seventy-seven years might freeze his blood, his last years and his undaunted genius must be addressed to the stupendous task of moving the mountains that frowned in front. "Will you really go on if you have not Hartington and Chamberlain with you?" he was asked by a panic-stricken partisan. "I will go on if I have nobody with me," was the response. Rage as we rightfully may against the tergiversation of English politicians of all shades, blue, buff, and red, later on, nothing must ever dim for Irishmen the memory of the saying or of the man.

When the new Parliament met in January 1886, Parnell's phalanx was the only party that knew what a week might bring forth. The Irish leader played the difficult part of Fabius Cunctator with consummate skill. Although he knew that Lord Randolph's thoughts were turning to Belfast and away from Dublin, and that Lord Carnarvon and his Chief Secretary had thrown up their posts rather than forswear their policy of the summer and autumn, he abstained from moving the Amendment to the Address

which must have turned the Tories out on the first night, until he should be quite sure both that the Tories had dropped Home Rule and that Gladstone's party would allow him to take it up. Gladstone himself sailed around the subject with the mariner's caution of one whose party was already split by two bands of malcontents, and whose most pious followers hung upon his words with the constrained silence of men expecting to hear their own death sentence. Parnell acknowledged his sympathetic references to Ireland with a gentle gravity, warm enough for encouragement, but not sufficiently accentuated to alarm the Liberal flock. He had not a hurtful word to say of Chamberlain even while his splenetic taunt : " Mr. Parnell has appealed to the Tories. Let him settle accounts with his new Tory friends," was still hot in Irish ears. Nobody could read into his measured sentences an angry thought of the Government whom he had put into power on their Newport profession of faith and who had at that moment a new Coercion Bill on the stocks. For there were still a couple of days before it was quite certain that Churchill had turned Orange incendiary and Gladstone nailed the Home Rule colours to his mast, and Parnell never took the second step until the first had been taken.

But quite a month before he had made to me a communication from which it was clear he had already made up his mind that the gamble for a Tory Home Rule Bill was lost. The division of the Irish vote in Britain was, of course, the *causa causans*, but he discussed with scarcely less annoyance a certain Press interview of Mr. Herbert Gladstone which led the Tories to believe that Gladstone was Parnell's real secret ally, and at the same time set Hartington and Chamberlain muttering rebellion. " Master Herbert ought to be whipped ! " he said with that rush of repressed feeling through his teeth which only escaped him in rare moments of excitement. " He will set

Randolph on 'the look out for some new deal, and start Chamberlain worrying the old man, if it was only to be even with him for the fate of his Unauthorised Programme." The old man's casuistical semi-repudiation of the interview only brewed fresh suspicion in the Tory camp and in his own. Parnell regarded as a still more vexatious obstacle to his plans an intrigue—if a frolic more worthy of a mischief-making schoolboy deserves the name—which was actively going on in London at that critical moment and for several months after. Henry Labouchere's sincere sympathy with Ireland, even while he scoffed at almost all besides, was unhappily marred by the irrepressible frivolity which caused him to carry on an industrious correspondence embracing Lord Randolph Churchill on the one side and Chamberlain on the other, which in its relation to Parnell assumed the character of a *chronique scandaleuse*, and circulated the impression that Gladstone desired to communicate with the Irish leader who was not to be found. The name of Mr. Herbert Gladstone was mentioned freely in these libellous chronicles, some of which I had the opportunity of perusing at the time. Insidious efforts were even made to seduce an important member of the Irish Party into the Cabal, and there were whispers of a Chamberlain dinner-party to discuss the supposed default of the Irish leader. The tattlers were utterly astray as to the facts. The revelation of Gladstone's own private memoranda in Mr. Morley's *Life* make it abundantly evident that Parnell consulted the old man's notions of diplomatic wisdom, rather than his own, by maintaining an attitude of watchful reserve, while the two great English parties were still hesitating between reflection and action in their attitude towards Home Rule. It is comprehensible enough that he should chafe at negotiations of extreme delicacy being transferred to the London clubs and newspaper offices and to the Chamberlain dinner-

table in terms of "Labby" tittle-tattle. Still keener was his resentment at the rumour that one of his own colleagues was to be of the Chamberlain Dinner list.

The moment for action was no sooner come than he struck hard and home. The new Chief Secretary (Mr. W. H. Smith) returned from Dublin on January 26th, with the draft of his Coercion Bill in his pocket. Before he arrived in London the Tory Coercionist had been expelled from office by a majority of seventy nine, and the greatest Englishman of his century had pledged his life to take up the noble burden of which the Tories *per viltate* (and also perhaps by ill-chance) had made "the grand refusal." Parnell's strategy was only baffled in one conquest to make a greater one. It was on a raw February night during the recess he made the announcement to four or five of us in his sitting-room at Morrison's Hotel, in Dublin. With his characteristic indifference to personal discomfort he had neglected to order a fire, and his mutton cutlet was growing cold and his pint of Rhine wine unopened, while he doggedly made his way through bundle after bundle of letters awaiting his arrival. All of a sudden the very room lighted up for some of us like a bit of heaven when, raising his head from some dull document, concerning God knows what, in which he had been absorbed, he remarked casually and without emphasis: "We are to have a Home Rule Bill. Will you, gentlemen, kindly turn it over and let me have your suggestions as to what we want—I mean what we can get?" The youth of a more fortunate time will never understand the glow of incredulous rapture the words sent through every fibre of one like myself who had entered upon the *Via Dolorosa* of the Nationalist struggle with an all but fatalist persuasion that it was bound to end in failure, desperation, penal servitude, or the gallows. There were bright and sustaining dreams enough to illumine the way, but at the back of all there was a

perfectly resigned knowledge that one must look for Ireland's deliverance, as for the solution of all the rest of this world's mysteries and unhappinesses, to powers and regions immeasurably beyond the reaches of our little lives. And now to be told that heaven was about to descend upon earth, and within this very session of Parliament, and to be told so by a man whose sober words carried conviction as complete as the first authentic bunch of grapes from the Promised Land brought to the Jewish wanderers hungering and thirsting in a wilderness of despair !

Hardly a week passed after that mystic vision in Morrison's Hotel before Ireland's perverse destiny seemed to open its jaws anew to engulf her : Parnell having recommended that *triste sire*, Captain O'Shea, for the vacancy in the city of Galway, two of the most influential men in his Party went down to oppose him. The incident can now be discussed without heat and in its true proportions. It was painfully memorable for me as marking my first, and indeed only, deep cleavage with a priceless collaborator and a friend whose friendship even the most tempestuous political antagonisms could never wholly eradicate—one whose impulses might, and as I think not infrequently did, deceive him, but who, if he was or affected to be a good hater, was one of the softest-hearted and most romantic of comrades, and whose inexhaustible play of fancy, with Puck-like humour, biting irony, and an eloquence as live and quivering, if it was also as unaccountable, as the lightning from the cloven sky, entitle him to be ranked as the most sparkling Irish Parliamentarian of his generation. For the action of his more elderly colleague and himself, almost everything might be pleaded, if the imperious necessities of Ireland did not plead the other way. His instinctive repulsion for O'Shea was scarcely so great as my own. I had constantly held him up to obloquy as a politician in *United Ireland*, and never, I think, exchanged a

word with him inside or outside the meetings of the Party. My only public exchange with him in the House of Commons was once when he demonstratively cheered some suggestion of mine in debate. My comment was this: "I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, to have incurred the applause of the honourable and gallant member for Clare. I want no further proof that I must have been in the wrong. I beg to withdraw and apologise for my suggestion."

But all that was for the reasonless reason for which the rhymester did not love Dr. Fell. Neither at that time nor for five years afterwards had either I or any other member of the Party, be he whom he may, a particle of real evidence of the melancholy story afterwards delivered to the world. That in the case of the humblest of our colleagues we should without any form of trial or evidence publicly assume the truth of an odious accusation propagated by his and our bitter enemies, would have been a foul wrong. That we should do so in the case of our own matchless leader, just at the moment when he held the threads of the country's destiny in his hands, and when every enemy of Ireland was straining to defame him and tear him down, seemed to me a depth of iniquity for which the curses of posterity would not be a sufficient punishment. Whatever semblance of justification subsequent events might seem to offer for Parnell's overthrow in Galway was wholly wanting then, unless it was to be found in the ruffianly hints with which Mr. W. T. Stead's private detectives furnished him in a shape that enabled him to defy the law of libel in the campaign of defamation of the Irish leader which he was beginning in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

So unpopular, however, was the duty of saving Parnell's power from destruction in the eyes of those wholly without the means of understanding all that was at stake that even a man in the responsible position of Mr. John Dillon, who had obtained a seat in the

newly elected Party, declined to join in a declaration in support of Parnell which was signed by every other member of the Party except the two who took their risks in Galway, and his action was none the less grave that he declined with no less caution to go down to Galway himself to join in the opposition to O'Shea. The young Nationalists of the town itself were, by the speeches made to them, stung to a pitch of fury at which anything was possible. The private meeting at the Young Ireland Hall at which they had to make their final choice was the most moving conflict between popular passion and popular self-conquest it has ever been my portion to witness. All that need now be said of that passionate day, while the fate of the Irish cause for our generation was trembling in the balance, is that it was one of the only two or three occasions within my own experience when the power of speech seemed to me the most precious of human possessions. Maturer years need not, perhaps, be grudged the sedate joy of remembering who it was, after Mr. Sexton, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and Parnell himself, had been angrily borne down, who, though stormed at like the rest in the beginning, eventually turned the fortunes of the day, and even prevailed over the affection, if not over the stubbornness, of the only colleague whose opposition really mattered. The argument that really carried all before it was what was to become of The Irish Cause if Parnell left Galway a beaten man? Gladstone's own mind had been made up, but nothing was yet settled, or even discussed, as to what a Home Rule Bill was to be. His party was honeycombed with discontent, uncertainty, and all but open mutiny, Whig and Radical. The newly elected Irish Party was still in its swaddling clothes. Parnell was the only man who represented either to England or to Ireland a settled purpose and the material power to bring it to pass. If in the first trial of his strength he were beaten by his own lieutenants and his own

people his continuance in public affairs could be no longer debatable. Who was to replace him in command of an infant Party and a fretful nation? What was to prevent the growing dislike of Home Rule in the Liberal Party from hardening into a refusal to budge another inch in the direction of Gladstone's Irish adventure? The young men submitted to be stretched on the rack, but they let no groan of pain reach the expectant ears of the enemy, and the situation was saved.

That night the members of Parliament from both sides of the day's battle dined together with a prodigious effort to be gay in the vast empty Railway Hotel, built for a trans-Atlantic traffic that never came. As all of us, except Parnell himself, were departing by the midnight train, he drew me into his room, and with something more like a sob than ever before or after escaped his breast, made this thrilling little speech: "I know all that my friends' action to-day meant. They will never regret it for the country's sake. It was the first favour I ever asked from my countrymen and it will be the last. From this day forth this fellow can do no further mischief."

"This fellow," indeed, cleansed the air of Irish politics a few months afterwards by refusing to vote for the Home Rule Bill and throwing up his seat for Galway; but it was only to devote himself to more ingenious means of vengeance as the perjured witness who swore that Parnell was the writer of the Pigott forgeries, and, when the perjury miscarried, as the aggrieved petitioner in the Divorce Court.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST HOME RULE BILL

(1886)

The battle was now transferred to the new Cabinet. Towards the latter end of March, Parnell summoned me to London by an urgent telegram, and for the next two weeks we were in almost daily communication, and for vast spaces of the day and night. Sometimes we were entering the underground regions of the House of Commons under the arcade at an hour of the morning that in the not remote days of the dynamite terror, might well have given the policemen pause, and there were various sittings (not of a very festive character) extending beyond midnight in the supper-room of a restaurant in the Strand. Parnell was troubled about the Bill, and still more about the Gladstone and Chamberlain wrestlings in the Cabinet. He was most vexed of all (for, he said, "if our grip goes, all goes") by the persistent circulation in London by the Labouchere busybodies, not, as he suspected, without certain Irish privities of injurious whispers, that the Prime Minister was complaining that he was pressing for interviews with the Irish leader and could not discover him. "Why," he said, "if anybody has anything to complain of, it is I. I have time and again pressed that we should be better able to get to business by personal contact, and the old gentleman dodges the suggestion. Upon my word, I think he is afraid of me!" he added with the incredulous glee of a schoolboy who should find the master on his rostrum cowering before him.

In matter of fact, he was at the time in close and constant association with the new Chief Secretary, Mr. Morley, for whom both men believed the question of Ireland to be the main interest of life, and who might always be relied upon to negotiate the exchange of views without the fear of controversial jolts or jars. Of Mr. Morley personally Parnell always spoke with respect, although occasionally with some betrayal of the poor opinion of the man of science for the man of letters: "There is one part of this Bill Morley thoroughly understands—our ceasing to come to Westminster. He is quite sound upon that. He wants above all else to be rid of us. I really don't wonder," he would genially add. "They don't understand us a bit to this hour, and they never will." But observations like these were only the rare distractions of a time of intense application to the business of the Bill. Upon the mere ornamental architecture of a Constitution he scarcely wasted a thought. What were to be the qualifications of the First and Second Order, whether the First Order was to be elected or nominated, whether they were to sit together or in separate chambers, whether he was to be Assemblyman Parnell or member of an Irish House of Commons, whether this or that power was expressly to be given or withheld, whether even it was to be done by a list of permitted subjects or by a list of excluded subjects, troubled him not at all. "All that is poetry, but it gives no end of material for concessions, if we are to gain the big things."

From the start he fastened upon Customs and Excise as the touchstone by which the Irish experiment must thrive or perish. "An Irish Customhouse is really of more importance to Ireland than an Irish Parliament," he once exclaimed with emphasis. He meant, of course, that an Irish Parliament stripped of its own natural revenues was bound to prove a curse both to those who created it and to those who might

strive to work it. He had got a fixed belief that Gladstone knew from the outset that full fiscal autonomy was a necessity of life for the success of Home Rule and proposed to concede it in his original draft, and only finally sacrificed it in the Cabinet to satiate the insatiable. This impression, I think, he derived from Mr. Hugh Childers, Gladstone's Chancellor of the Exchequer, who undoubtedly favoured the frank concession of Customs and Excise himself, and who throughout the Home Rule struggle proved himself a faster friend of Ireland than any Englishman, except one, who basked in the limelight. Strong, if not quite outspoken, confirmation is to be found in Mr. Morley's *Life*, beginning with a letter of Gladstone six months before (V. III, p. 235), in which he says: "I would not put my foot down as to revenue, but would keep plenty of elbow-room to keep all customs and excise, which would probably be found necessary"—a sufficiently supple proposition to begin with for the hardest of Imperial financiers. Parnell reported with increasing restiveness the losing fortunes of Irish finance in the distracted counsels of the Cabinet. He was not sure that Mr. Morley altogether grasped the financial problem in its earth-to-earth details, and finally insisted upon a personal interview with the Prime Minister. A couple of nights before the introduction of the Bill, as I sat in the "silence" room of the Library, finishing an article for *United Ireland*, Parnell put in his head from the corridor, where the cry of "Who goes home?" was echoing, and beckoned me out. Having seen the last of the loiterers out of the strangers' smoke-room downstairs, he sat me down in his usual corner, to the despair of the attendant and the policeman, who knew it was the preliminary to a prolonged sitting, but bore it with an outward sweetness which I always thought was an exquisite personal tribute to Parnell. He had just had his interview with the Prime Minister,

and was very grave. "I never saw him closely before. He is such an old, old man! His face is a bunch of wrinkles. He had the wide-open eyes of a fine animal in a fright. Once, when he yawned, I really thought he was dying, but he flared up again. He will never live to see this through." Asked how the Bill stood, his reply was: "Badly, and going to be worse." Harcourt, who had stood staunch on all else, was threatening to resign if the Irish Legislature was allowed to touch Customs. Without Customs, what was there left except the power of speech-making? He had told Gladstone as gently as he could that he would have to throw the Bill out as it stood. "I do not want to add to your worries, Mr. Gladstone," he said, "but please recollect you have no better guarantee for our good faith than that we tell you plainly it won't do. If we did not want a settlement, we would grasp at your Bill, bad finances and all, and make your Irish Legislature an official headquarters for disaffection." Gladstone's Budget depended upon savings in Irish government which were monstrously exaggerated. "No doubt, the present incumbents in Irish offices are so bad a lot that there would not be a murmur of discontent in our own camp if we disbanded them in regiments, but you would have to absorb half the savings in pensioning your people off, and if our own men contracted a taste for the good things in the Government offices and the Four Courts where should we be then?" To a fixed Imperial contribution he made no objection; he made no objection if Irish representation at Westminster was to cease. Gladstone was apparently under the delusion that the Irish leader clung to the desire for continued representation in the Imperial Parliament. The latter forbore to undeceive him in order to hew down the Imperial quota of contribution by allowing Gladstone to think that Ireland was making a supreme concession in surrendering her grip on the Imperial Parliament as

well as her freedom of taxation. To the demand that Ireland should bear any proportion like one-fourteenth of the Imperial expenditure, he opposed an implacable negative. "Suppose you had another Napoleonic war on your hands," he said, with the prevision of a prophet, "with what conscience could you ask Ireland for a contribution of £20,000,000 or £30,000,000 a year, for a war in which her only interest would be that her own veins would probably have to spend most of the blood?" Gladstone acknowledged the possibility, but threw out the suggestion that it might be avoided by fixing an equitable Imperial contribution for a considerable number of years. "That," Parnell remarked, "would depend upon the figure and the old gentleman, when it comes to be a question of cash, is as hard as a moneylender, but it was the only glimmer of comfort he had to offer, and we must keep him to it."¹

"We must allow the Bill to be introduced," he added, in a brown study of perplexity, "but it is a bad job. I am not sure how long we ought to stand it." I made the suggestion that the party, or at least some of its wiser heads, ought to be called together to take counsel in the emergency. "Pooh!" was the reply. "They will have to be called together, of course, but it can only be when our decision is taken. You saw what happened at the Westminster Palace

¹ Parnell kept his word. In its final draft, the Bill provided an Imperial contribution slightly over £3,000,000 a year for a period of thirty years, after which the 103 representatives of Ireland must be recalled to Westminster before any proposal to alter it could be entertained. Had the Bill passed, consequently, the Imperial Parliament would have no power to demand an additional shilling up to a date when the late world-war had been already two years in operation, and even then only with the free consent of Ireland. Even if the abortive Home Rule Act of 1914 were in effective working order, Ireland's Imperial contribution would now come nearer to £30,000,000 a year than to the £3,000,000 of the Bill of 1886.

Hotel the other night. In Dublin six weeks ago I called for any suggestions that might be helpful, and the only piece of constructive wisdom forthcoming was a proposal that we should have the nomination of Sheriffs and should promote police officers from the ranks." The allusion was to an informal gathering in Mr. Justin McCarthy's room at the Westminster Palace Hotel of half-a-dozen of the foremost men of the party, to whom, if my memory is not at fault, Michael Davitt was added, as a just tribute to his unique rank among his countrymen. Parnell submitted to them in a somewhat perfunctory way the main proposals of the Bill, without eliciting very much comment that was worth remembering. Parnell had an unlimited confidence in the mass of his party, and paid an unenvious respect and even deference to all the men who were its chief ornaments, whether in the House of Commons or in the country. Except on formal decorative occasions, however, when his graciousness to all his colleagues would have been pronounced faultless in a great officer of the Court, he could never be shaken in his attachment to the Napoleonic doctrine that no battle was ever won by a council of war. "One has got to take the risks," he used to say. "If you succeed, everybody will feel it was he who won, and if you fail they will all be obliged to you for saving them from the responsibility." I was alarmed to find traces, as well, of his natural secretiveness beginning to be intensified by a suspiciousness of two of his principal colleagues in connection with recent misunderstandings affecting his relations with Gladstone. His sensitiveness, as I did not fail to remark to him, was curiously in disaccord with his own vehemently expressed belief that the Prime Minister might have saved the Bill, had he courted the author of the Unauthorised Programme with a little more assiduity. As he took up his hat to break up our conference, it was with the observation

he only could make : " I shall have another try before the old man speaks."

When the old man spoke, on the occasion of the introduction of the Bill, two days later, it was to the greatest audience man ever addressed—an Irish race panting with expectation and a world-wide British Empire bewildered and perturbed. By daybreak the inner lobby was in a tumult with members girding up their loins to fight for their seats. By a paradox common enough in the psychology of the House of Commons, the assembly which, once settled to business, was weighted with solemn cares and as hushed as a cathedral, began as a mob of rowdy striplings rioting in a football scrimmage, with all the rules of the game, except good humour, suspended. As soon as the delightfully Irish old Sergeant-at-Arms, Captain Gossett—so well beloved of his outlaw countrymen that it became one of their pleasantest ambitions to be locked up in the clock-tower as his prisoner—gave the order for throwing open the door, the mob, old and young, Tory, Radical, and Rebel, burst into the Chamber, in a stream of hot lava, heads, shoulders, and legs blent and stewed together on its boiling current—surely an entirely English way of prefacing one of the stateliest debates in England's history. My own usual seat below the gangway having fallen to a gigantic Guardsman in the charge, I found myself wedged into the midst of the Tory Praetorians immediately behind the Front Opposition Bench, with Sir Bartlett Burdett Coutts and a worthy old Orange Colonel (whose very name, alas ! time, *edax rerum*, has nibbled away into Lethe) as my next neighbours. From this astonishing eminence, I was able later on to startle the Prime Minister, as he arose from the Treasury Bench, three or four yards in front, with a war whoop of welcome which turned his big wondering eyes upon the serried Opposition benches, as though even the ranks of Tusculum must scarcely

have forborne to cheer. The demonstration also caused Lord Randolph, who sat immediately in front, to turn around with the cheerful observation: "Ah! Mr. O'Brien, it is you! I dare say you Irish gentlemen will never forgive me for Belfast."¹ "We are too sorry for you to be angry, you ought to have had a better fate." He laughed, as though the answer, if a little patronising, might easily have been worse under the circumstances. A couple of years had scarcely passed, before he spoke for the last time from the same bench, to a House that almost wept before the wreckage of his intellect and of his meteoric fame.

When the high debate began, the scene of the morning's Rugby scrum had changed to as august a spectacle as the world could furnish forth. The House of Commons is paltry in size, is often addicted to vulgarity, and is most generally abandoned to a sodden stupidity, as of a gross man after a plethoric meal, but there are a few hours in a generation, and this was an incomparable one, when it seems to condense within its walls the greatness of a world, all that is massive in its intellect and majestic in its strength. Even the ugliness of the scratch lot of chairs huddled together all over the usually unoccupied "floor of the House," which was the only Boeotian device hit upon to accommodate superabundant membership—even the knowledge that the very Gunpowder Plot vaults underneath were alive with members beaten on the football field and now gladly congregated to listen through the ventilation openings overhead—were not without a grandeur of their own as marking the dimensions of a sight never seen before or since. It is a wise dispensation to provide no

¹ In conformity with his audacious hint to Justin MacCarthy, Lord Randolph had just been up to Belfast to beat the drum-taps of rebellion in the Mecca of the enlightened Orangemen, whose brethren had made ready to rotten-egg him in Liverpool a few months before for his traitorly dealings with Parnell.

Royal Box for such occasions, for kings and queens would find themselves outshone not merely by the enthroned democracy on the green benches below, but unpleasantly jostled in public interest by the great men of the earth in the galleries around them or petitioning in the lobby for admittance.¹ But in all that starry heaven of celebrities there were only two men to-night for whom the world had eyes. Those of us who knew something already of the proposals the Prime Minister was unfolding had leisure to saturate ourselves through and through with the more seductive influence of the man himself.

It is already beginning to be hard for those of a new time to understand the semi-divine worship with which even the hostile half of an assembly, which was really the world, heard a speech which few would now read through in Hansard without some stern call of duty. Gladstone's fame as an orator, great as that of the most supreme of actors, threatens to be not very much less ephemeral. Speech was for him a miracle worker, but wrought its miracles for the upliftment of mankind by dealing with their practical concerns, and adapting itself to plain men's intelligence and emotion. The language was not such as men conceive in a fine frenzy: for the sake of a more benign human object, it had to offend the fastidious ear whenever needful by a sly reference to the arts of an "old parliamentary hand," or by some triumph of sublime "gag" like the cry, "The flowing tide is with us!" whose justification was that it did in fact

¹ It is one of the funny asides of history that upon a night when there were men among the disconsolate ghosts of the lobbies who would gladly have given a cheque for £1000 for an order of admission, James Gilhooly succeeded in smuggling into the Ladies' Gallery a little Bantry girl over for a holiday, at a moment when there was no unoccupied spot visible except on the ceiling. "Jim" had already learnt something of the art which afterwards made him more powerful than the Speaker or the Sergeant-at-Arms in negotiating impossible admissions.

all but turn the tide when it was running mountains high against him. The mere form of his sentences—prolonged, sinuous, broken into parenthesis after parenthesis, as is inevitable in the case of many-sided men who do not rigidly prepare their speeches by the midnight lamp—lost in literature what was gained by a variety of appeal whose convolutions, nevertheless, always ended quite surely in a roll of noble music. The shorthand note is as powerless as the ghastly phonograph to bequeath to after times any adequate notion of the untranslatable things which were after all the soul of his greatness as an orator—the massive figure set four-square to all the world's contumely in a great cause—the immense leonine head framed in its silvery mane—the great kindled eye whose expression changed in the course of a single speech from majesty to scorn and from scorn to fun, and back again to heaven-kissing sublimity—above all, the incomparable melody of a voice which had the power of transmuting common words into a no less grand but a more tender Gregorian chant. Those who have heard the Silver Trumpets high up in the Dome of St. Peter's at the Pope's High, High Mass will never forget their ravishment; but who is much the wiser for being told the fact?

The business of the night was to expound and to persuade. Persuasion might well have failed an envoy from on high. The better half of Gladstone's Party had the air of listening to their own funeral oration; many of the remainder were already rebels, from whose ranks the first shots might leap forth at any moment. None the less, above the deathly silence, the discouragement, the gathering wrath of faction, swelled the untroubled organ-voice, now setting even intricate details of his financial proposals to music, now publishing from the heights the glad tidings of peace between a wronged nation and her obtuse-hearted masters. It was one side—the heavenly

side—of the old man's genius in a state of grace. The other and the human side was only made manifest when he came to wind up the debate a few days afterwards, when the batteries of all the enemies in front and rear had been unmasked—Hartington's elephant artillery, Chamberlain's poisoned bullets, Lord Randolph's tormenting rocket-battery, and, in the words of the old Gaelic saga, he "went under his enemies and over them and through them, like an eagle among small birds"—like a destroying angel, who was not going to be baulked in his high mission by all the assembled terrors of age-long prejudice or contemporary treachery. If the tongue of seraphs were of no avail, the good sword of Michael was here to cut laneways through the hosts of the Devil and his angels.

A curiously different study was the man who, even for eyes beholding Gladstone at his greatest, had a stronger fascination still. Nobody was in any doubt that what Gladstone spoke, Parnell did. He was the creator of that grandiose scene, in which Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers, the Cabinet of yesterday and the Cabinet of to-day, moved on the Imperial chess-board as they were directed by the finger of the taciturn Irishman who but yesterday was their prisoner with Coercion Act after Coercion Act hurled at his head, and but the day before yesterday was the detested head of half-a-dozen crazy Obstructionists, without one English friend among all the complaisant hundreds whom he had just ejected from office or whom he had just replaced there. It may truly be said of him that at that height of glory, where even greatness might well have grown giddy, he forgot nothing except himself. If he was conscious at all of the universal gaze that sought him out before every other object in the House—call it defect of imagination, call it, more justly, inborn simplicity of character—it was to wonder where these silly people

found the attraction. The legend of Parnell as a mystery-man was the concoction of journalists who knew nothing of him except the caution with which he surrounded his personal movements, owing either to dangerous relationships with the secret societies, or to the fear of government espionage, or later to the malignity with which newspaper spies in search for a sensation dogged his private life. In essence, he was an unaffected Irish country gentleman, with a genius for command and for doing Ireland's business. He had few or none of the neurotic afflictions of genius, and of vanity least of all. He never even attained the vain distinction of a corner-seat. The high-bred, pallid, gently smiling Irish leader, in the midst of his clans—happy, indeed, with such pale happiness as visited a somewhat lonely life, but with no more pride of place, no more sense than the latest of his shy recruits from Ireland of being the central figure in a world-drama in which a Gladstone played a less enthralling, if more showy, part—was to the heart of him what he was in outward showing—a man absorbed in his designs, but in designs wherein his own personality was at zero-point. The conjecture can scarcely be far astray that, as the hours went on, his thoughts were only busy with how the old man was putting this point or that, how far Chamberlain's Federal coquetries might still leave a door open, how shrewdly "Tim" was galling, perhaps over-galling, the Lucifer of the Unauthorised Programme, and we may be quite sure, how poor was going to be his own contribution to the evening's entertainment.

That was, however, where the genius of the keen man of affairs left the rhetoricians in the shade. His observations did not contain a coloured sentence, much less a boastful one. They were weighty with the pressure of tremendous issues, but the words were simple, businesslike, and unpretentious. Above all that had gone before, they were listened to with a

tension that was almost harrowing by a House half reassured and softened by a subduing calmness which suggested : " Here is the man to whom the rulership of a fretful realm may be safely confided," but still haunted by the old mistrust of the Parnell of their own melodramatic imaginings. The flash of passion that nearly always came once in his most prosily-phrased speeches was not missing this time, either. It burst from him in the midst of an offer of power and honour to the loyalist minority, but only as an inseparable part of the Irish nation. " No, Sir, we cannot give up a single Irishman ! "—it was this and nothing more ; but the words went to Irish hearts like the throb of a nation's love, and live more potently than ever to-day as a rebuke to the English and Irish politicians who would fain coerce Ireland to give up more than a million of Irishmen and the holiest places of her history, by way of realising her freedom. His general approbation of the Bill was couched in terms of softly-spoken homage to its author, but no attempt was made to cover up the weak points on which he laid an unerring finger. Upon the instability of an Irish Exchequer cruelly crippled in its taxing powers, he touched with a cold insistence that must have reminded the Prime Minister of the interview of a couple of nights before when he found himself confronted with the frank rejection of the entire measure, if Irish fiscal independence were withheld. Those who knew did not mistake the meaning of his hint, however carefully wrapped up in velvet, that his final acceptance of the Bill must depend upon its being reconstructed in Committee in the three special departments of finance, police, and justice. For the moment, however, his assurance that the principles underlying the Bill contained a balsam which must end by healing the immemorial quarrel between the two nations, impressed the sceptical mind more than all the radiant protestations of Gladstone and all the

malign prophecies of his critics. After Parnell sat down, the three remaining days of the debate were "a tale of little meaning, though the words were strong."

The opposition to the First Reading was not pressed to a division. Nobody was deceived as to what was to follow; but here was an event greater than any since the Act of Renunciation of 1782 which acknowledged Ireland's independence. The system of government by force was carried to its grave with the body of the unfortunate Forster the day before the Home Rule Bill was coming on. Ireland's independence, in some shape, had become the first item in the programme of a Party which never pinned itself to a reform that did not ultimately reach the statute-book. It had become the one business in life of the greatest Englishman of his century. It had won the allegiance of the last Liberal Viceroy, Lord Spencer, and of the last Tory Viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, and of quite a bevy of ex-Chief Secretaries—Tories like Sir W. Hart Dyke and Sir Robert Peel; Liberal Unionists like Sir George Trevelyan, who was already a Home Ruler at heart; as well as robust Liberals such as Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Morley. Small wonder if in the first speech in which he really found his sea-legs in the House of Commons, Mr. Morley flung across the floor at the hectoring Unionists the prediction: "If we cannot pass this Bill, you will pass it yourselves!"

CHAPTER VIII

BACK TO THE WILDERNESS (1886)

There followed three weeks, every waking hour of which was one crowded with glorious life for the unsuspecting mass of the Irish Party and of our countrymen, but for those who knew how the battle was really setting brought an ever darkening certainty of defeat. It was no longer a question of imposing our own terms, but of how much of the Cabinet's lightened cargo could be preserved from the winds and waves or whether it was indeed worth preserving. There were almost nightly assignations between Parnell and myself in the almost lightless corridors at Westminster when all but the policemen were gone, or at some late supper-house where black-avised foreign revolutionaries were rattling dominoes or high-coloured beauties awaiting or returning from their turn at some of "the Halls" close by.¹ Parnell kept a gallant face, but there was always some fresh tale of Liberal defections, of new waterings down, of this or that member

¹ A detail not without significance. At the Café Royal, where we sometimes met, Parnell had many months previously entertained a distinguished American—Senator Jones, of Florida, if my memory does not fail me—to a sumptuous Party dinner, the bill for which he had, with characteristic inattention in such matters, long overlooked. To the proprietor who had several times approached me in shady corners with sugar-coated hints on the subject, I replied: "Why not speak to Mr. Parnell himself?" To which his startled "Ah, Monsieur!" with gentle elevation of the eyebrows, was as pretty a tribute as French politeness could frame to Parnell's power of inspiring awe where he was himself least conscious of it. When for my own comfort's sake I jogged his memory, he laughed. "What, the Senator again? Would you mind settling it with your own cheque? I hate to give my

of the Cabinet smitten with tremors which he mistook for conscientious scruples, of Gladstone himself showing signs of turning bridle, of a Liberal Party no more fitted to outride a General Election than a scuttled ship to face the ocean in an equinoctial gale.

Customs and Excise once for all went overboard to keep Harcourt. The enormous Land Purchase scheme, to buy off the landlords, was patched together at haphazard a night or two before its introduction. A solicitor's clerk in Dublin would have turned out a more creditable legislative proposal. The only excuse for it was that it was never to pass. But it did much to ensure that the Home Rule Bill was not to pass either. Parnell's ingenuity was tasked for a plea of even decent toleration for a Bill which would have compelled the tenants to pay a minimum of twenty years purchase of an unreduced rental, while the British taxpayers, for whom an Irish Parliament was but an airy abstraction, were worked into a white terror by the spectre of a colossal liability—he boldly and most falsely swelled it to £300,000,000—which Chamberlain agitated before their ignorant eyes. Then came Stead's oracle: "This won't do!" in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, proclaiming from his own Pythian three-legged stool, that the departure of the Irish members from Westminster, hitherto the most tempting Home Rule bait for English eyes, must be given up if red ruin was not to swallow the Empire or Gladstone and his Bill to be torn limb by limb by the last ragged regiments of his Party. Last of all there arose the whisper and then the clamant demand that the Bill must be indefinitely hung up, if by hook or crook the sterile victory of a Second Reading could be secured for it.

signature to people I don't know. There is sure to be a Scotland Yard man among the waiters." And he was instantly reabsorbed in State affairs, as though duns were the least obtrusive and indeed the most obsequious of acquaintances.

Upon both these latter points Parnell was not to be shaken. If there were to be two Parliaments competing for Irishmen of ability, the more splendid Imperial one would have an easy victory, and the little assembly in Dublin would sink into contempt and beggary. Or else the moment Irish public opinion realised the consequences, men would be sent to Westminster for the one purpose of claiming the repeal of the new Constitution or re-opening the war between the two countries in a more envenomed spirit than ever. If the experiment was to succeed, it could only be by concentrating Ireland's best brains and purest ambitions in Ireland for the service of Irish ideals.

There was room for more anxious debate when it came to be a question of purchasing Chamberlain's assent to the Second Reading on condition of the subsequent "hanging up" of the Bill. The panic-stricken Ministerial Party and all but two members of the Cabinet were known to be thirsting for the compromise. To Parnell it was plain enough that the nominal victory of a Second Reading would really mean the abandonment of the Bill, in submission to its implacable enemies, and with a loss of prestige to its author from which, at his age, no recovery was to be looked for. One night his mind was all but made up to throw out the Bill on the Second Reading, to expel Gladstone's caitiff party from office, and trust to some new clash of English factious interests or some nobler impulse of free democracy for the triumph of a principle now for ever consecrated by Gladstone's high authority. When, at the meeting of the Liberal Party at the Foreign Office, Gladstone himself was forced to appear in penitential garb with an offer of surrender to the rebellious powers of Birmingham, arrangements to call the Irish Party together to authorise this grim decision were actually being concerted between us, when a message from the Irish Office

called Parnell away. When we met the next day his stand was definitely taken. Our discussions of the previous night proceeded upon the assumption that Chamberlain would accept the concessions humbly proffered to him and go through the form of supporting the Second Reading. In that event Parnell would not have flinched from the responsibility of putting a summary end to the imposture. There arrived now some astounding confidential information that Chamberlain was taking the obeisances of his party and the self-abasement of his old leader with the hauteur of a conqueror, and would be content with nothing less than the unconditional destruction of the Bill in the voting lobbies. The Liberals were still keeping up their courage by whistling the old tune that the Second Reading was safe, that Chamberlain would at the last moment relent, or that next to nobody except the Hartingtonian Whigs would follow him. The delusion did not for a moment impose upon Parnell. "I dare say the old man is not to blame, but nothing can save the Bill," he said. "It would be madness for us to relieve Chamberlain of the responsibility of giving it the finishing stroke. We've got to see this wretched debate out with the best face we can. Above all, not a hint to any human being or we shall have a stampede."

In essentials, my memory is, thank God, as firm as the outlines of a Flaxman drawing, but the minor curves have a way of fading out. Hence the relief of being able to turn to a few memoranda in shorthand which have by some accident, come down amidst the flotsam and jetsam of those tempestuous times. They begin on the 24th of May, and break off as abruptly on the 4th of June. The idea may have been that we had reached a stage at which interesting things might be noted without any longer dreading seizure by the police, and that by the later date it had become evident that the days of immunity from police aggression were again coming to an end. The value of the

few extracts which follow is that they give a glimpse such as only the emotions of the hour can give of the dangers thundering about the Irish leader's path while our sanguine countrymen were disporting themselves in the high heavens in an ecstasy.

" *24th May.* P. drew me into a corner to warn me against Mrs. — of Chicago.¹ He was white with excitement, Suspects she is over on the business of the dynamiters. Quite solemnly believes she is capable of throwing a bomb from the Ladies' Gallery. I laughed and told him H(arrington) and I had just been showing her over the House and giving her a cup of tea on the Terrace in full view of the public. He spoke with extraordinary energy and implored me to have no more to do with her. One of his remarks was : ' No man can ever be sure he knows a woman. It is not the first time a clever and able man was deceived by one.' Told me M(orley) knew she was in town and asked him what brought her. Both he and G(ladstone) were alarmed for fear of dynamite explosions that would finish everything. Told him it was much more likely she was out for an interview for her paper. He grew downright angry and kept on repeating, ' I know.' Warned me not to mention his name in the matter, adding, ' It is not because I trust you that I would trust everybody you would trust.' How like the secret societies if he should be right !

" *25th May.* Three hours closeted together. He told me G. is meditating surrender. Except Spencer he has not a man ready to face the panic in the party. He has called a meeting for Thursday at the Foreign Office. P. believes we must count upon an announcement that Bill will be withdrawn after Second Reading. A dangerous Radical Cabal are saying : ' Send the old

¹ A lady journalist of remarkable gifts, whose husband was at the moment the most powerful Irishman in the United States.

man to the Lords.' Nothing could resist the cry if the Bill were once withdrawn. Talked the whole thing up and down with sore hearts. Were agreed that withdrawal would be worse than any defeat in the lobbies. P. said he would write to tell him we should have to vote against the Second Reading if C(hamberlain) was to be allowed strangle the Bill.

" 26th May. Telegraphed article to *United Ireland* nailing our colours to the mast against surrender.

" 27th May. G. announced at Foreign Office meeting he would agree to withdraw Bill after Second Reading and reconsider Clause 24.¹ His own friends are even more rejoiced than the kickers. They dread a General Election more abjectly than any schoolboy of spirit would dread a flogging. Their hearts are only half in their votes. Resentment against the Irish for voting Tory still rankling. They now pretend to think the Second Reading quite safe. P. when he could afford to say anything said, 'A bad day's work.' *Later.* P. has just seen G., who told him there was nothing else to be done to avoid defeat. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'this is defeat in its worst form, for it can't be undone in your time or in mine.' He believes the difficulties in his own set are too much for G. who is in the mood for withdrawing himself as well as the Bill. P. thinks time is come to call a meeting of the Party to decide whether we should not straightly throw out the Bill. He was called away by message from Chief Secretary.

" 28th May. A surprise. Chamberlain is not satisfied with concessions. Will hear of nothing short of putting the old man out of action once for all. P. says, 'More fool he. His victory would make him master of the situation.' I asked if he was actuated by personal pique, was there no chance of his taking

¹ The clause discontinuing the attendance of Irish members at Westminster.

Home Rule in hand himself on the Canadian model of his speech on First Reading? That speech was on full Dominion lines. 'Yes, because he only wanted to make a point and hadn't thought it out. He has now fallen back on some petty Canadian Provincial thing which won't do.' He might twist round again if it was his game, but it was not. He has lost his grip on the Liberals and would go down before a coalition of Hartington and the Tories if he appropriated Gladstonian Home Rule as his own. He has seemingly decided Jack Cade must turn Tory. The general ruck of the Liberals still cocksure the Second Reading is safe. 'They don't mean it, they can't mean it,' P. said, 'the Bill is doomed. But that being so, we should be mad to take the odium of finishing it ourselves and finishing the old man with it.' He told me M(ichael) D(avitt) has done some mischief among the Radicals by going about saying he has no objection to the withdrawal of the Bill. 'Poor Davitt!' he said, with his indulgent smile. 'But nothing now really matters!'

"29th May. *Pall Mall* has a scandalous paragraph hinting that P. is domiciled at Eltham. Stead has a detective shadowing him. That is his scurvy way of arguing Clause 24 must be dropped.

"30th May. Called in at Mrs. R(edmond)'s At Home. Mrs. — pounced on me and showed her teeth. She must have tried to force an interview with P. and been repulsed. Among other nasty things said she had evidence of a speech of P. saying he would not be content until the last link of the Crown was severed. I lost all my diplomacy and told her she might rely on it his enemies and Ireland's were already sufficiently well informed. She said nothing short of separation would satisfy the Irish in America. I remarked that I had understood her very differently when we met a few days ago; that she would quite possibly find the virtue of the Irish-

Americans would not be put to the temptation of accepting the Bill ; but that be that as it might, it was we at home who had taken the risks before and would have to take them again ; and that the happiness of our own people must be our first consideration. My heat was, I am afraid, as undiplomatic as P.'s coldness ; but she felt she had gone too far and became prodigiously civil, and will certainly throw no bomb—at least of the nitro-glycerine order.

“ *31st May.* While Fowler was speaking, Trevelyan came in from the Chamberlain meeting and in an hysterical state spread the news : 48 of them, it seems, have resolved to vote against the Bill. The word passed all over the House as swiftly as if the Speaker had announced it from the chair. The old man held his ground on the Treasury Bench all the dreary night through, and shook hands cordially with Fowler—seemed to be sitting in some grey shadow of death, but a noble study in dignity and longanimity.

“ *1st June.* Chamberlain answered by Sexton in the best speech of his life. Began badly in an overwrought condition, with the nervous smirk of self-satisfaction that mars half the effect of his speeches, but restored himself by some ironic thrust which set the House laughing at the status of Birmingham Town Commissioner to which he reduced the arrogant Radical renegade. From that time forth S. held the House under command and sailed along at ease in his glittering firmament of sarcasms and epigrams. C. took his punishment manfully, save once or twice when he hissed out some spitfire interjection—his arms folded, his boxer's head thrust back, his keen close-shaven face presenting the smallest surface for attack, the sharp point of his nose high in the air smelling the battle of the next round. A quaint sequel. Mrs. Gladstone, hearing that Mrs. ——— was in the Ladies' Gallery, sent for her to tell her that she wished the Irish-Americans to know that

Mr. G. considered S.'s speech the finest thing in contemporary Irish oratory. What a Tragi-comedy of Errors.! There was also a touch of pure comedy. P.'s object of all things was to tide over the remaining days of the debate without any maladroitness explosion from our own camp, and seeing Matt. H(arris) rise, whispered : ' For goodness' sake, don't let Matt. give us an exhibition.' As he sat down after a first failure to catch the Speaker's eye, I gently suggested : ' Don't you think, Matt., after Sexton's speech, we cannot well improve upon matters for to-day ? ' ' Well,' was the majestic reply, ' that was Sexton's speech. It wasn't mine.' At first signal of peroration from the man on his legs, Matt. popped up again, indomitable.¹

" *2nd June.* Dilke, who had intimated he would be glad to speak on the Irish side, if reassured as to how our fellows would receive him,² made the plunge to-day in a weighty speech which set us all dismally reflecting : ' He might have saved Chamberlain if he had not ruined himself.' Ireland's usual luck ! Debate really only prolonged at request of Ministerial Whips in belief that the waverers are getting more shaky and that they may still turn a dozen votes or two. But long-headed Liberals like Henry Wilson are sure we are in for a General Election, and that, as the Party have no candidates and no money, the smash will be phenomenal, even in Yorkshire. Their one comfort is that C(hamberlain) can't win either, but may be ground to dust by a Tory-Whig Coalition. Labby is going about telling the story that the G.O.M. acknowledges all is up, consoling himself with the

¹ I cannot recall whether Matt. eventually got his chance. If he did, it is safe to assume his speech was one worthy of an old *pur sang* Nationalist as unshakable as Croagh Patrick on its granite throne by the wild western waves and of one quite as capable of being moderate as of being bold as occasion demanded.

² Sir Charles Dike lay at that moment under the heavy cloud of divorce proceedings, from which he never wholly emerged.

thought that the Lords must in any case throw out the Bill. 'Not if you send five hundred old Dodds¹ across to teach them wisdom.' 'Do you think,' suggested the sly old Parliamentary Hand, 'do you think we could trust them to cross the Hall?'

"3rd June. T. P. O'Connor resumed the debate in the worst speech of his life or of anybody else's. Read from lengthy galleys of type, sprawling all over the benches. Such pretension, such bad taste, so stupidly astray in policy—whatever can have happened to him? Was content with Bill as conceding the naked principle of an Irish Parliament, and in words of nauseous flattery left G. at full liberty to reconstruct the whole thing in a new Bill. P. was very angry. 'He has left G. out of the box without a question.' 'That is what comes of leaving these men out of your confidence,' I said. 'T. P. had not the least notion of what was the *consigne*, or he would have cut off his hand rather than make that speech.' 'Nothing could make an Irish Nationalist out of an English Radical,' was the reply. 'I shall have to beat up the old man and insist on his sticking to the Bill, if the sky falls.' Did not hear the result, but fancy we owe to it M(orley)'s speech later on. He gave a vehement pledge that there must be no lessening of the powers of the Irish Parliament. His speech was all that T. P.'s was not—pluck, passion, the old Adam in him flaring up and lashing around him with the fury of one of Cromwell's saints. We had no longer to organise a *claque* to enhearten him in the awkward pauses. Just because it was plainly unprepared, it was the speech of a man alive in every nerve of his body and mind. We all knew he could die on his own sword with the grace of an old Roman. To-night he was putting his sword to better use on the astonished heads of the enemy."

¹ A favourite butt of the wits at the Reform Club at the moment.

There was no further entry. I suppose it was that our short spell of freedom to commit our thoughts to paper was hurrying to its end and the days of outlawry were at hand again. All that need be said of the remaining nights is that, in a battle of the giants, our race shone in the foremost ranks in the speeches of Mr. Healy, Mr. Sexton, and Mr. Dillon. In the case of Mr. Healy's reply to Sir George Trevelyan—one sparkling all over with diamond wit—its merit as a masterpiece of debating was the more marked because I happen to know it was made without a minute's preparation in the matter of argument, not to say of language. Sir G. Trevelyan was actually on his legs when, at Parnell's request, I asked him to make our reply.¹

Upon the closing night (7th June) the conquerors could find in the division lobby alone any answer that will be remembered to the speeches of Parnell and

¹ My own small contribution to the debate had the disadvantage of following a weighty speech from the Marquis of Hartington, whose warnings were still tolling in English ears with the solemnity of a funeral bell. All that can be claimed for it is that it was true to what has been, from the morning watch even unto the twilight shadows, the creed of my life in relation to England—"Friends, if you will; rebels, if we must!" It is significant of much that it was almost solely because the speech came from the man who was at the moment the incarnation in English eyes of the most uncompromising violence in word and deed that could wound the vanity of England in Ireland and in the House during the five previous years, that an inordinate amount of respect was paid to my words by the most crusted enemies of Home Rule. Said the *Spectator*: "In some respects the speech of the evening, which told most heavily on the side of the Government, was the speech of Mr. William O'Brien, the Editor of *United Ireland*, and when he entered the House the most violent, though also one of the most honest, of the Irish Party. . . . Irish members were not there to offer exaggerated assurances to the House. Some risk must be run. But were there no risks in the rejection of the Bill? Mr. O'Brien promised well for the tolerance of the Irish Parliament towards the Ulster Protestants, who might quite conceivably make their influence predominant in the Irish Assembly. In a word, a more

Gladstone. Parnell's self-conquest was all but praeter-human. His reproaches—which cut perhaps all the deeper for their gentleness—did not contain a word that need embarrass him the next day in renewed negotiations either with the ex-Tory allies who had turned their talents to exploding arsenals of rank bigotry in Belfast or even with the vicious ex-Radical who six months before was proposing to become our unauthorised National Apostle. But he developed quite a new side of his character, which the puzzled House no more looked for than to see a fire burst from under an iceberg, when—always in the plainest words, but in a voice of seductive music, never lowering by an inch the dignity of the spokesman of a wronged and ancient nation—he penetrated the most porcine hide among Ireland's enemies not merely with the sense of shame which an Englishman never objects to avow for his Irish past, but with a foreboding that the vote of to-night might be the most wicked blunder of all in England's dealings with her tortured prisoner in the Irish seas.

effective speech for Mr. Gladstone's policy than Mr. O'Brien's could not possibly have been made in the House of Commons."

The Echo (then the organ of the revolting Liberal Unionists): "If I were a Tory M.P. I should dread the effects of half-a-dozen speeches like William O'Brien's. It was the most remarkable speech of the evening, and it derived additional impressiveness from the known honesty, unselfishness and high-mindedness of the speaker. Of course it was the spirit rather than the politics of his speech which even the Tories cheered when Mr. O'Brien resumed his seat."

The *Dublin Evening Mail* itself: "These debates will be recorded among the highest flights of Parliamentary oratory. Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Parnell, Lord Hartington and Mr. O'Brien all spoke as men do speak when they believe their audience is accessible to persuasion. They were all careless of ornament, indifferent to admiration, and bent exclusively and with desperate energy on the winning of votes. The consequence was that they attained a high reach of real eloquence, and Mr. O'Brien's speech in particular was eloquent from first to last."

Violence is the only way of ensuring a hearing for moderation. That is, in a nutshell, the history of what is absurdly styled "constitutional agitation" in Ireland.

The old man spoke at a midnight hour when as he rose with a face of corpse-like grey his faithful old guardian angel in the Speaker's Gallery must have sighed to think he was not preparing for a restful bed in place of shocking a world in arms. The more detached human spectator was reminded of the Laocoon of the Vatican ringed around with the serpents that seemed to have enfolded his every limb and every limb of his sons with their coils, but of a Laocoon, aged and worn though he was, who, once roused, was a match for all the serpents, and cast them from him one by one with bruised bodies and fangless jaws. There is nothing finer in his life, or in any life, than the glorified strength with which he turned upon his accusers who were planted all around the House, beginning with the Tory Opposition chiefs full in front, and travelling above and below the gangways, until he ended with his back to the Tories and his face to the Whig and Radical deserters who sat behind him, making his sword ring on their bucklers to the last with a resounding valour that seemed more than human, and surveying the future across the chasms now opening before him with the tranquil certitude of a just and holy cause. Do not think the picture a too fond exaggeration. After the disillusion of more than thirty years, the memory of the scene comes back in more mountainous bulk and in a more sacred light than ever. The night which was to have been the grave of his greatness as a statesman will, perhaps, be remembered in the coming ages as the occasion of the most sublime message to humanity to be found in his long life.

The majority against the Bill was only 30 in a House of 651—not one to intimidate a nation that has outlived Cromwells and King Williams by the score. The oscillation of sixteen votes from one side to the other was, however, sufficient to breed bad blood for a generation between the two countries. One of us

made the House stare during the debates by mentioning that ours is a race who sometimes worship failure more tenderly than success. An illustration of that truth, with all the passion of the world's saddest history throbbing within it, was afforded by the Irish Party when, as soon as the frenzied cheers of the mere politician victors had spent their force, they stood up to a man on the lost battlefield with as proud a front as any conqueror of Austerlitz or Waterloo. Even "T. P.'s" cry of "Cheers for the Grand Old Man!" did not succeed in vulgarising the demonstration. For the first time the new Party showed at their best in the rosy morning of youth and incorruption, while their allegiance *mit gut und blut* to Ireland was still unstained by the faintest shadow of dependence upon any English Party, and before the first taint of the disillusion and jealousies that eat into the heart of the soundest parties of mortal men, whether they be devoted to Politics, or to Art, or to Religion itself, had yet infected their faith in each other or in their own mystic brotherhood. For the first time—if not also for the last in the full meaning of the words—the Irish Party and their leader, on that night of glorious loss, stood at their zenith.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHICAGO CONVENTION (1886)

The appeal of the broken Liberals to the country had the expected result. The Home Rule Government was replaced by a Unionist Coalition, Tory, Whig, and ex-Radical, commanding a majority of 110. Parnell's strength in Ireland remained unshaken, save so far as the balance in Ulster was affected by the defeat of Mr. Healy and myself in two constituencies, which no Nationalist had ever won before or has ever recovered since. How little the abstract merits of Home Rule had to do with our defeats may be judged by the frame of mind of a typical Presbyterian elector at my first contest in South Tyrone who deliberately spoiled his vote by writing opposite the name of my Tory landlord adversary, the Hon. Somerset Maxwell (afterwards Lord Farnham) "No landlord!" and opposite my own name, "No Pope!" This time the Tory landlord gave place to a Scottish democrat with as full-flavoured a detestation of Landlordism as myself (Mr. T. W. Russell), and a few scores of honest haters of Popery, who had cried a plague on both our houses at the previous election now took care to sign their ballot-papers effectively and changed my majority of 55 to a majority of 99 for a candidate who, before the world was much older, moydered the brains of his Orange constituents by turning Home Ruler himself.

The prospect before the country was now one that might well dismay even a fanatic in forlorn hopes.

Five years of unremitting war against two successive Coercion Acts had already exhausted the most insuppressible spirits. Forster was fought by a country maddened by the fear of famine, and in a crisis when the insurrectionary spirit of the Land League was in the full fury of its brief career. The three years' resistance to the Spencer Coercion administration was a tougher business and was already an affair of difficulty verging on desperation. The Land League was extinct, Parnell absent in England, Dillon in Colorado, Davitt in a mood in which silence was his most helpful service. Forster lived to see the Kilmainham Treaty with his victorious prisoners signed above his head, and from his death-bed heard the gathering rumours of a Home Rule Bill as the official programme of his old Party. Lord Spencer, if his days in Ireland were poisoned by no less bitterness of defeat, sought a finer revenge. He became Gladstone's most trusty counsellor in making frank recognition of the fact that the handful of men grouped around a newspaper who seemed to be almost his only thwarters were powerful solely because they gave the most violent expression to the longings of an inextinguishable race.¹

But this Calvary had now to be traversed all over again. When the rejection of the Home Rule Bill was in full sight, Lord Salisbury made a speech in which he left no doubt of what was before us if he triumphed. The orator who at Newport eight months before, when the Irish vote in Britain was still to be bargained for, conjured up misty apparitions of the Austro-Hungarian independence which he had deputed his Lord Lieutenant to negotiate with Parnell,

¹ My only personal meeting with Lord Spencer was once in the crowded lobby of the House of Commons when he expressed to Mr. George Leveson Gower, one of the Liberal Whips, his desire that we should become acquainted. He was a man of few words, but these he spoke with a gentle cordiality which had a distinction of its own. The only remark of his I can recollect was: "It is a pity we did not know one another a little better."

now girded at the sensitive race to whom he owed his last spell of office as a horde of Hottentots, and proclaimed "twenty years of firm and resolute government" to be his prescription for them, in place of the discarded programme of Legislative Independence for which Lord Carnarvon had nobly offered up his political life. Irishmen might rage against a cynical double-dealing more insufferable than the hypocrite sword and Bible of Cromwell; but of such was the world of the politicians. And it was no longer to be a question of combating Coercion for three years or even for the twenty years of Lord Salisbury's firm and resolute tyranny. We were on the eve of a Coercion code without any parallel in the annals of legislative brutality, which was to suspend every species of human liberty in Ireland for ever, or so long as the Statute-book of England remained unburnt by a vassal world. There was nothing for it but to turn our backs once more upon the radiant vision from Mount Nebo and face the Amorrites back in the old desert land, buoyed up by no sign from the heavens except a certain pillar of fire which has never quite deserted the journeyings of our race in that place of horrors.

At Roche's Hotel, in Glengariff, I received the following message from Parnell:

" Irish Parliamentary Offices,
" Palace Chambers,
" 9, Bridge Street, London, S.W.
" July 22nd, 1886.

" My dear O'Brien,

" I was very sorry about your defeat, but you made a splendid fight of it, and of course the result was foreseen.

" I'm most anxious that you should attend the Convention at Chicago on the 21st, as you would be better able than anybody else to smooth over the

existing jealousies in America, and let me know on your return as to how matters exactly stand there.

"I would ask Justin McCarthy and Sexton to accompany you.

"Yours very truly,
"CHAS. S. PARNELL."

Two days later I received an urgent wire pressing me to go to London, and I there learned from his lips the gravity of the business in hands. The Convention at Chicago was to decide a no less serious issue than whether the Dynamiters were to capture our organisation in America. The source of the mischief he traced to Alexander Sullivan, the most powerful of "the Triangle" who ruled the Clan-na-Gael, and the delegates of that redoubtable secret organisation would form perhaps the largest and much the most energetic part of the Convention. Parnell was still more uneasy at the news that Davitt was on his way to Chicago to attend the Convention in an undefined capacity, without any authority from or consultation with the Irish leader. That Davitt should have any personal leanings towards a policy of dynamite was to him, of course, inconceivable. Neither did he believe that he was then or at any time animated by any personal design against himself. The trouble was rather that Davitt had no concrete purpose of his own since his Nationalisation campaign had aborted, but was beset by an incurable temptation to keep up his old acquaintance with the dangerous arcana of the secret societies, which, indeed, had been of service in the origination of the Land League, and was to be of service again at the Parnell Commission. He was bound by ties of intimate friendship with Alec. Sullivan, in whom Parnell (as it turned out, with some reason) discerned a virulent enemy of his own as well as of the Parliamentary movement in its later successful stages, and what Parnell apprehended was not that Davitt could

be seduced into any approval of a policy of Dynamite, which, indeed, Sullivan was too shrewd a politician to touch in public himself, except in relation to some intrigue of American politics, but that his notorious soft-heartedness for his friends might be so far imposed upon by a strong and subtle intellect as to make him a party to some apparently innocent change of front which would render Parnell's severance from the American organisation unavoidable. Surely, I argued, this was a matter of sufficient seriousness to be encountered with the full weight of Parnell's personal authority on the spot. He offered objections, the solid foundations for which were afterwards made manifest enough in Chicago ; but the conclusive one was that his presence would only envenom the desire for a spiteful victory over himself, and that a personal defeat by the " Camps " of the Clan-na-Gael at such a moment might entail not only the loss of the American organisation, but his own retirement from the leadership of the movement at home. Even a victory for Dynamite in his absence would be a less dangerous matter.

Mr. Sexton could not be induced to take part in the dangerous mission. John Redmond was eventually fixed on as my colleague, and one braver or more loyal in anxious hours no man could be fortunate enough to find. We set out by the Cunard steamer " Servia," in that modest period renowned as " the greyhound of the Atlantic," for its seven-day voyage. The days passed like as many hours, thanks to the Irish ship-doctor, Mr. Finucane, who possessed all the charms of his race, with a background of melancholy which was really unversified poetry, and which in the long run shrouded his bright life in hues of tragedy. Excepting a slight hereditary disfigurement of the nose, he was of the type of manly beauty—muscular frame, blue-black Irish eyes, silky black beard, brilliant white complexion warmed with olive,

a blend of strength and deep tenderness—which sets women dreaming. There was one female divinity who outstripped all beside in his favour, and that was Ireland, and, in the concrete, her ambassadors. He entertained us day and night in his deck-cabin with an assiduity which must have ended by making us unpopular with the lady passengers, only that a heaven-smashing gale removed most of them from the scene for half the voyage.

Before we passed Fire Island we were boarded and captured by the dynamiters, and, it may with substantial truth be said, never quitted their custody until we steamed out of New York harbour a fortnight afterwards. On the cars to Chicago, we were escorted by a group of Generals, Colonels, Judges, and journalists, about whose prosperous broadcloth and jolly hospitalities there hovered not the faintest scent of nitro-glycerine ; all the same, we winced under some indefinable sense that from their jovial grip there was no redemption. Curiously enough, I found Patrick Forde of *The Irish World*—who then held the record in England as a blood-boultered monster—to be the most interesting study of the lot. He was the only Irishman in my experience who, in our expressive Irish phrase, “ had no language ”—that is to say, was never heard from a platform, and could listen to a long evening’s discussion without contributing more than an interjection. He was eloquent only in his newspaper—and in his prayers. But his newspaper could fire the blood of an army of fanatics and levy taxation with the assuredness of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and nobody who knew him doubted that his prayers and the spirit that burned through them were the secret of his strength. A weird, dingy little man, poorly barberised and poorly clothed, distinguishable in nothing from a poor relation of the Generals and Judges except by a pair of eyes in which a certain sleepy fire was for ever smouldering. From

brilliant flashes of silence during the long train journey, I pieced together the astonishing discovery that Patrick Forde was a changed man. For years he had been advocating and organising the blowing up of London with the same tranquil faith with which a prophet of the Hebrews proposed to "Make his arrows drunk with the blood of the Canaanites." His bombs were never directed at Parnell's person,¹ but were exploding every week in his newspaper against the futility of Parliamentary methods. One of the visible miracles wrought by Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule was the conversion of *The Irish World* to the cause of a permanent and fundamental peace-treaty with England. The friends of Patrick Forde would as soon doubt that the stars are fire as that his fanaticism for peace would be as genuine as his fanaticism for war to the knife and the bomb had been, both being, indeed, opposite facets of the self-same overmastering idolatry of Ireland which possessed for him the holiness of a religion. The trouble was that now the proffer of peace was repulsed with a slash across the cheek of Ireland, and fires were beginning to burn again in the obscure depths underneath the bristling eyebrows.

The rest of our companions, or custodians, were less reticent, and for all their boisterous conviviality made no disguise of their determination that the insult from England must receive some resounding answer from the race. The day was hot with the unbearable heaviness which forbids one to move under

¹ While dynamite explosions were every night threatening the House of Commons and on two occasions thunderously making good the threat, the thin quorum whom the Whips were able to keep on the premises, had a pathetic access of cheerfulness whenever Parnell or the members of his Party were seen to be in attendance. "Isn't it shocking to think, Mr. Parnell," observed one worthy Ministerialist, "that you as well as we might be blown up by your own countrymen?" The smiling but enigmatic reply was: "I should not so much mind if there was 'a call of the House'" (ensuring the compulsory attendance of every member).

pain of sunstroke, and the night was stuffier and more unbearable still. It must be owned with shame that we sped through the abounding cities of the tremendous continent without a thought except for the anxieties that awaited us and were indeed already scalding us like the red-hot air that wrapped us round. Even the luxuries of the Pullman car, one of the daring novelties in which America was pioneering the world, did but afflict me with the nightmare that the two long tiers of beds in which individuals of both sexes were fearfully and wonderfully nailed down for the night in their leathern coffins were the *malebolge* of a still hotter region, the midnight ding-dong of the train bells as we snorted our way right through the streets of the cities supplying the *alti guai*, the appropriate infernal music, and the rolling eyes and ebony countenance of the gentleman of colour who from time to time visited the roasting tenants of the leathern sepulchres suggested that he had acquired his fire-baked blackness from a lengthened practice as a turnkey in the eternal Pit.

When we arrived in Chicago on the evening before the Convention it was to learn that the Caucus had nominated a public advocate of dynamite—Rev. Mr. Betts, an Episcopalian clergyman—for the Presidency of the American League. Caucussing was proceeding in all the parlours of the hotel, but our business was only with “the Triangle” of the Clan-na-Gael, and most of all with one man who confuted a proposition of old Euclid by proving that there was a triangle of which one side was greater than the second and the third put together. We were closeted until long after midnight with an inner circle of which Michael Davitt, Patrick Forde, and Patrick Egan were also made free. Rev. Mr. Betts himself was not present, nor, if my memory does not play me false, was John Finnerty, who played the *beau rôle* of a Public Orator of Explosives the next day, but who, for all the

worshipful advertisement lavished upon him by the London Press in that capacity, had a heart as soft as a boarding school girl's, joined with the gigantic frame of a heavy dragoon, and that rush of Irish eloquence headlong as a charge of cavalry which gave him his only real influence with the propagandists by deed.

From the start one personality overbore and oppressed the council chamber: it was that of a man who was incontestably the ablest Irish-American of his day, and also, if it must be added, the least engaging. A lawyer and politician of vast, if devious, talents, Alec Sullivan was a liverish man, strong-browed and strong-jawed, about whose bloodless lips and sharp white teeth there played a certain pitilessness which all his softness of voice and studious airs of deference could not change to anything better than cold self-control. One was not too much surprised to learn that he had killed a man for an affront to his wife, and later to hear that the assassination of an unfortunate Irish doctor in Chicago had given rise to whispers which overshadowed the last years of his life. This portrait may, however, be the painting of strong prepossession; against it must be set the fact that he had the gift of attracting the fast friendship of more than one man like Michael Davitt, who abhorred the slightest taint of foul play in any cause or against any adversary.

For Alec Sullivan, the cause was already decided; there was nothing to be done except to be reasonably civil to strangers and to show them around the town. When I mentioned that the election of a dynamiter as President of the League would put Parnell's representatives in an intolerable position, he resented the objection as almost an impertinence. "What we have got to do," he said, "is to strike back at England, and not be mealy-mouthed." "That is what we have got to do at home as well," was the reply, "but we have no business here at all unless the representatives

of the Irish people are to be recognised as the best judges as to methods." "You have got a pretty long innings for your own methods, and all you have won from England is a blow in the teeth." "That is scarcely generous or even true. Within five years Parnell has committed both English Parties to Home Rule, one of them a party that always ends by winning, led by a statesman as much venerated in America as in Europe. In mercy to Ireland don't ask us to give up all this for the chance of half-a-dozen bombs demolishing London." Before we had proceeded far it was manifest that abuse of Gladstonian Home Rule and the substitution of a new demand for Separation was but the public cover for the malign personal quarrel for which Parnell had prepared me. What precisely his grievance against Parnell was he did not specify, except by sinister hints and scowling looks, but he was plainly smarting under the sense of some financial injustice done to his reputation in the course of the transactions between the American and home organisations, and in a moment of uncontrollable passion threatened that in his own vindication he would make a clean breast of the secret before the Convention the next day, no matter what the consequences to Parnell. Davitt, who had hitherto kept silent, now joined us in protesting as hotly as ourselves, that if threats of this kind were intended to intimidate us they were contemptible, and if they covered any serious design to turn the Convention into a means of blackening the Irish Cause in the full hearing of England, no man with honest Irish blood in his veins could listen to such a suggestion without abhorrence.

Sullivan was staggered by the storm his dark sayings had stirred up all around the table. No more was heard of the revelation bogey at the Convention, but he stubbornly stuck to the demand that there must be some resounding repudiation of "Consti-

tutional " methods. His argument was urged with considerable skill. Even the generation of Irishmen who left Ireland burning with hate of England for the iniquities of the Famine Clearances which were equivalent to the wilful murder of a race, had supported Parnell's peace programme, without wincing at his unconditional proffer of forgiveness to their old foe. Had England reciprocated, they were ready to give even an exaggerated allegiance to the new experiment of good-will between the two nations. But England had, on the contrary, insolently refused the most stinted modicum of self-government and had undertaken a new twenty years war of conquest to beat down the last remnants of the race unless they consented to turn themselves into Anglo-Saxons. What other answer was endurable except some immediate proof that Irishmen had the power to strike back and with compound interest? Even from the Parliamentary standpoint, it was adroitly suggested, worse might happen than extreme measures from an irresponsible left wing. It was the fear of civil war that exacted Catholic Emancipation. It was the Fenian spirit that gave the Land League its fighting strength. England squealed under every form of war that was not employed for her own purposes. Was blowing up English public buildings and ships by men who took their lives in their hands any more cruel or immoral than England's assembling her soldiers to evict hundreds of thousands of defenceless Irish families from their homes to enforce exactions that her own law had now stamped as infamous?

It was answered that all this was excellently urged and was shockingly true. Did we need to be told it was only by horrifying England anything had ever been wrung from her? If the Liberal Party was now a Home Rule Party it was because we had shattered two Liberal Coercion Acts in six years, during which not a day passed that was not a day of suffering and

of bitter war. If the Tory Government was now making ready to evict another 50,000 of our people during the winter, did anyone suppose we were going to be more chicken-hearted about returning blow for blow? It was not cowardice, but rudimentary veracity, to recognise that we had no power of combating England in the field, but we had a thousand ways of shaming and tormenting her, and at any peril of our own liberties and lives, the government of Ireland by force could and would be made impossible.

For the first time Partick Forde broke silence. "That," he said, while a gleam of fire shot from the dusky eyes under their thick shelter-trench, "that is the hub of the whole business. God bless you!"

But there must be no misunderstanding between us. It was true that the measure of Ireland's freedom could only be bounded by possibilities, opportunities, and methods; but of these latter, we at home must be the judges. If there was any difference about that, we had no business in coming, and we should have no business in remaining. The conversion of the Liberal Party to Home Rule, accentuated by millions of British votes, even in the chaos of the late General Election, had transformed the situation in a way the wildest imagination could not have foreseen a few years ago, and imposed upon us, in honesty no less than in wisdom, the obligation of trying the experiment loyally out. We were no longer warring against a solid England, but with the feebleness of two Englands, the other and the friendly one being that which had invariably prevailed, as soon as blind prejudice had run its course. To throw these advantages to the winds for the sake of a policy of petty outrage which would be a mere pin-prick to the power of England, but would revolt our stoutest friends in Britain, and instantly compel Gladstone and Parnell as well to abandon the field, would be a pitch of homicidal lunacy against which all mankind—and among the foremost, America—would cry out.

Sullivan was not slow to observe the growing impression among his friends. He scoffed at the suggestion that the Convention was going to talk dynamite. They were prepared to vote a handsome vote of confidence in Parnell and his policy, but the Rev. Mr. Betts' nomination to the Presidency was finally decided upon and must stand, if we did not want every "Camp" of the Clan-na-Gael to fly to arms. That was, however, I explained, the point on which any compromise on our part was not to be thought of. Of what worth would be a farcical vote of confidence, if the first place in the League was before the world voted to an undisguised apostle of dynamite and with the assent of Parnell's own representatives? How would it be possible for Parnell or his policy to survive such a blow? I expressed some confidence that the moment the most extreme section of the Convention understood the danger, as I proposed they should be made to do in secret session, nobody would persist in the proposal. Sullivan rejoined that the only men that mattered had met already and knew what they were about. In that case, I said, being bound by the strict limits of our authority from Mr. Parnell, all we could do was to claim a fair hearing from the Convention, and if we failed in impressing them, to take a respectful leave of them.

"I guess you would not leave without a hole through you," the whisper came low and sharp through Alec Sullivan's teeth. "I am not sure that I have caught the words correctly," I was proceeding to say, when he hurried effusively to assure me that his words were only whispered to a colleague and were not intended for my ears, and that they were nothing more than a rough comment upon the wild ways of many of the men of the Clan whom the "Camps" of the west were sending to the Convention. I accepted the assurance with equal friendliness, but added that, come what come might, no fate could be so terrifying

for us as to return home with a message which would dismiss Parnell and Gladstone into private life, and to be obliged to own we had remained tongue-tied while such a wrong to Ireland was being perpetrated before our eyes. I had no difficulty in expressing in very cordial terms our thankfulness for the patience with which they had listened to what must have been, in some respects, unpalatable expostulations, and bade them good-night with the observation that, having now quite definitely explained our own position, we had no right to intrude further upon their special deliberations.

Redmond and I retired to my room to discuss the fortunes of the night. It was for him a first experience of the underworld of the secret societies and would have been for most men a daunting one. He found himself groping darkly amidst intricacies and pitfalls where the clash between at least three transparently honest Irish organisations, open or clandestine, was rendered still more unintelligible by cross-currents of American politics of the least ideal order. All he did quite clearly see was that the existence of the Irish movement was at stake, but that was enough to make him an ally of unflinching fidelity throughout the midnight battle with "the Triangle," as well as an orator of unfailing charm in the easier hours of the next day's triumph. Daylight had already broken when a knock came to the door. It was Davitt, to announce the glad tidings that the Betts candidature had been dropped, and that one of the most eminent and respected men in wide America—John Fitzgerald, the Nebraska "Railway King"—had consented to be the President of the League. Davitt—doubtless for reasons of ancient personal friendship for Sullivan, Forde, and Finnerty—had preserved a somewhat irritating aloofness during the critical phases of the conflict with "the Clan." I have good reason, however, to know that in the caucussing that went on

all over the hotel after our departure, he took an eager and influential part in persuading the headmen of the secret societies to reverse their programme ; and by a psychological contrariety, which was one of the most lovable foibles of the man, Davitt spent hours with us celebrating the victory with the exuberance of a schoolboy released for the holidays, and was the first the next night to tackle John Finnerty, when that big baby sought balm for his defeat by exploding an oratorical cracker which might well have been, under altered circumstances, an explosion laying the Irish movement in ruins.

The public proceedings of the Convention were now plain sailing. To meet the Convention in full session was like feeling the free ocean breeze blowing on one's forehead after awaking from a nightmare in a cavern. It was an assembly which for weight and dignity of deliberation rivalled the House of Commons of the great nights, and individually much surpassed them in brawny physique and free-born republican vigour, and in a hundred subtle hints, which were not even vulgar hints, of a wealth and station befitting the foremost citizens of the world's mightiest nation. One rubbed one's eyes in stupefaction to think that these serried ranks of clergymen, congressmen, soldiers of the Civil Wars, judges, bankers, silver kings, and railroad kings, could be the Convention which we had spent the night in preventing from being turned into a conspiracy of dynamiters. " The wild men from the West " were, no doubt, there at the pivotal points, and would have obeyed without asking the reason why, had orders from " the Triangle " so ordained, but even these, preposterous as it may seem to the wise men of England to suggest such a thing, were mostly quiet business men, not a few of them millionaires, as ready to pour out their own blood as their money for Ireland in any desperate pass, but so little bloodthirsty, for mere revenge's

sake, that they had only to get an inkling of the new situation of the Irish Cause, to make the roof shake with acclamations of the name of Gladstone, barely, if at all, less soul-stirring than those which thundered around the name of Parnell.

The resolutions of the Convention, passed by the thrilling process of a "rising vote," faced every issue without a quavering note. They voted an unhesitating expression of approval of Parnell's policy and confidence in his wisdom. They expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Gladstone ("the greatest, noblest living English statesman") and to "the English, Scotch, and Welsh democracy for the support given to the great Liberal Leader during the recent general elections." And these resolutions (in the framing of which Redmond and I declined to take any part) were cabled to Parnell as the assurance "of a cordial endorsement of your policy by a united and harmonious Convention."¹

¹ Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who was now Tory Chief Secretary in Ireland, had challenged me to repeat before an Irish-American audience my peace-speech on the Second Reading of the Gladstone Home Rule Bill. The following extract from one of my speeches at the Chicago Convention will show whether I deviated from the "friends if you will, rebels if we must" attitude of the House of Commons, before an audience of the extremest zealots of the race that could be concentrated from the ends of the earth. Readers are already in a position to judge whether there was any minimisation even in the midnight council chamber of "the Triangle."

"You in America hold the fate of our cause in the hollow of your hands. That tremendous power of yours involves a tremendous responsibility. It is of supreme importance that our position should be made clear beyond the possibility of misrepresentation. It would be cowardly and false on our part to forget that we have now friends as well as enemies in England. There are 1,500,000 of English workingmen, who have registered their votes in favour of an Irish Parliament in College Green. There is one great Englishman who is worth another 1,500,000. We told Mr. Gladstone—we told all Englishmen, that if they reached out an honest hand of friendship to Ireland they would not reach it out in vain. We were perfectly frank with them. We told them candidly, that

The election of John FitzGerald, of Nebraska, to the Presidency was the crowning glory of the day. The success of his maiden speech, following an embarrassing succession of high-flown orations, had a touch of natural comedy which threw the orators wholly into the shade. "Men of the Convention," began the burly, rough-hewn ex-navvy and present Railroad King, whose melodious Limerick accent was the only suggestion of softness in an exterior rugged as the Rocky Mountains, "You do me honour. I've never before struck a pick in these talking mines of yours, but I guess I can scrawl my name right enough to a cheque for an odd million dollars or two." "Bully for you, John!" cried an admiring voice from among the delegates. For some inscrutable reason, the new President, usually the best-tempered of men, took offence. "Who are you, you bla'guard?" he to English rule in Ireland we are and will for ever remain irreconcilable; and until they can exterminate the last man of our race, they will never have rest or peace, until the hopes that have lived through seven centuries shall have blossomed at last over our land. But we told them also that our quarrel with England was bounded by her rule within the four shores of Ireland. We told them that upon the day when the working millions of England, by their votes and of their own free will, hauled down the flag of English domination in Ireland, the hatreds and passions which have raged for ages between the two countries would subside. We ventured to promise that for you as well as for our people at home, and standing here in the presence of this great representative gathering of Irish-Americans, who would be only too proud to shed their heart's blood in the cause of Ireland on the battlefield, I am not afraid to repeat that promise in your name. If we are wrong in that, we are wrong in everything; for it is the root and the essence of our movement, that it is possible to conciliate Ireland without injuring England. We have promised for you, and you have promised for yourselves. The resolutions of the Convention are a message to all the world, that peace and friendship were within the grasp of England, if she had been as wise and bold as Mr. Gladstone; aye, and that peace and friendship are within her grasp even yet, upon the day when she once more enthrones Mr. Gladstone in power, and commissions him to conclude his treaty of peace with the Irish nation."

cried, fixing the offender with a napoleonic eye. 'Come up here on the stage if you're a man, and I'll teach you how to keep a civil tongue in your head when you're talking to John Fitzgerald. Here's Garryowen!' and in a twinkling he threw off his coat and had his fists in battle array. The Convention roared with delight. From that moment forth the new President was the most popular man in the assembly. There went an honest man triumphing over the mean adornments of the politician. Perhaps they worshipped in him, too, a type of Irishman, whose uncultured bluntness told the whole story of their indomitable race in telling the story of the unfriended Limerick lad, who, arriving in an emigrant ship from his own famine-stricken land, began with the pick-axe of a navvy, and in the invigorating air of the young Republic grew to be the principal railroad builder of the Union-Pacific and president of two of the vastest banking concerns of the West.

From all this, there are two morals to be deduced. The first is, that if the English Press was right in assuming that this Convention of men of personal integrity and social station as high as the United States could produce was an assembly of dynamiters fired with an implacable hatred of England, the fact would constitute an indictment of English rule in Ireland such as must make its continuance impossible in any civilised society worth preserving. The truth lay all the other way. The bulk of the Convention, even of the most pronounced hue, were men who, while ready for any extreme of personal sacrifice in the battle for Ireland's liberty, with a very sufficient scorn for England's divine right to sermonise us on our morals or our methods, hailed Gladstone's first olive-branch with an almost rapturous enthusiasm for the man and for the British democracy behind him, and were ready to persist unweariedly in the new

ways, even after the treaty of peace had been insolently rejected by the English Parliament and electorate on a first hearing. Nevertheless, and here comes in the second reflection worth ruminating, the English newspapers suppressed from the eyes of Englishmen this message of conciliation from millions of England's most embittered enemies, and represented the couple of dozen dissentients of the secret societies as the only persons worth attention in a Convention which needed but a responsive spirit to bury the enmity of the race to England deeper than did ever plummet sound. They reserved all their cable space and captions for a hare-brained stump speech which was not even delivered at the Convention at all, but at the close of a subsequent public meeting—which was admitted by the orator to bind nobody except himself—which was repudiated on the spot by everybody of authority in connection with the Convention, and was laughed down by his audience with the good-humour of men enjoying a spell of comic relaxation after the anxieties of a grave patriotic duty nobly performed. With a wickedness incomparably more hurtful to the two nations than the orator's high-falutin, they turned the Convention which put an end to the dynamite campaign from America into a means of advertising the dynamiter *pour rire* who was perhaps the least influential man in the assembly, and between themselves and their *protégé* launched us upon another quarter of a century of "poison-mad, pig-headed fighting" between the two races.

CHAPTER X

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN (1886)

“ I dare say you did as little harm as could have been managed, but Finnerty seems to have bossed you all.” What must have been the effect upon the uninformed English mind, if the above was the conclusion of the expert Irish Leader when I crossed to London to report the result of the Chicago Convention ? As soon as he had learned what really occurred—the defeat of the candidate of “ The Triangle ”—the unambiguous endorsement of the Home Rule programme—the repudiation by every responsible speaker of any right or purpose to dictate to the leaders at home—the grotesque insignificance of Finnerty in the whole proceedings—the proofs at our private sittings that Alec Sullivan’s personal rancour was at the bottom of all the mischief, and the fact that his plot had been baffled with a completeness which practically terminated his public career—Parnell’s indignation with the London Press went to a length he seldom permitted himself even in his most confidential hours. “ The dynamiters are gentlemen and statesmen,” he declared, “ compared with the fellows who run these English newspapers.” I gathered from him that a serious view of the situation was taken by Mr. Morley—always in moments of stress a Brutus more intent on showing how nobly he could die on his own sword than on winning his battles—and that he was himself anxiously deliberating whether it would be possible to go on, if the triumph of the policy of Dynamite had been as complete as the

Press panegyrists of John Finnerty had represented. As a matter of history, from the date of the Chicago Convention, no dynamite bomb was ever again exploded in England.

But no sooner was one gap stopped at Chicago than a more horrifying abyss opened under our feet at home. 1886 was a year of agricultural depression even more deep-seated than that which had stirred up the revolution of the Land League in 1879. The prices of butter, beef, pork, grain, and wool had fallen, roundly, by 22 per cent. and were still heavily falling; the calamity was brought to a crisis by a season of storms and rains which laid waste the farmers' harvest; high official authorities themselves acknowledged that the means of paying even the reduced Judicial Rents would not be forthcoming, while hundreds of thousands of leaseholders and others excluded from relief under the Gladstone Act of 1881 would lie defenceless at the landlords' mercy. To look for mercy to the landlord, it was already plain, was to expect milk from a male tiger. The same cruel instinct which prompted the Orangemen, maddened by the guilty incitements of Churchill and Chamberlain, to drench the streets of Belfast with blood as soon as they were assured of the defeat of the Home Rule Government, now bristled up the courage of the landlords to a fresh campaign of extermination under the wing of a Ministry raised to power for a twenty years' war for the subjugation of Ireland. The evictions, which had fallen to 698 families in the first quarter of 1886, when the Home Rule Bill was in gestation, rose to 1309 families in the second quarter, when the doom of the Home Rule Government was sealed, and were sure to be doubled again as the winter approached. Vast numbers of landlords who (as was proven before the Cowper Commission) received only a fifth part of their nominal income themselves, owing to the incumbrances accu-

mulated by follies of their own or of their ancestors, refused a penny of abatement, and evaded the Gladstone Act by acquiring the tenants' interest by a forced sale at a nominal bid of £5 and putting it up to competition among landgrabbers, or compelled the tenants to redeem by finding not only the full amount of the extortionate rents but law costs of equal amount in addition. The political conflict was thus complicated by an agrarian crisis which threatened nothing less than the spoliation and eviction of tens of thousands of rackrented tenants, at the hands of bankrupt landlords, whose last desperate chance lay in the patronage of Ministers who had not hesitated to call up the fiendish spectre of Orangeism for their own office-hunting ends.

I found Parnell harassed with the anxieties of the new emergency, but as clear-sighted and ready as usual with his remedy. He startled the new Parliament at one of its first sittings with a Bill whose very moderation admonished them how little a change of Ministry had relieved them of the obsession of the Irish difficulty. He proposed to revise the Judicial Rents on the basis of the fall in prices since they were fixed, to suspend evictions for the winter on payment of fifty per cent. of the rent due, and of such further proportion as the Land Commissioners might deem equitable, and to allow the leaseholders and other hitherto excluded classes of tenants to share the relief afforded by the moratorium pending the considered legislation promised by the Government for the spring. If the House of Commons had the wisdom to close with this proposal, we were all agreed that the winter might be peacefully tided over and the energies of the Irish Party devoted to a mission of persuasion in the English constituencies. But should Parnell's Bill be rejected, as was his Bill which might have averted the horrors of the winter of 1880 (and as the new Bill was, in fact, rejected a week or two

afterwards), what then? Were we to lie down submissively under the governmental decree that the agricultural crisis was a fiction, and that the Judicial Rents were as intangible as the sacrosanct timbers of the Ark? Were the hundreds of thousands of our countrymen threatened with eviction for the non-payment of admittedly iniquitous and impossible rents likely to stand by while their homes were levelled and their children left shivering on the mountain-side on a mere hint that resistance would be politically inexpedient? Were they not certain to be driven back to more desperate weapons if deserted by their leaders? Even from the standpoint of political expediency, what would be the effect in England of a peace at any price in Ireland? Did not every lesson of history teach us that Irish representatives tootling hymns of conciliation to the English electorate would have but a contemptuous audience if Ireland proved the efficacy of the methods of the landlords and the coercionists by lying motionless and tame under their scourges?

Parnell realised it all. His mind was agitated between the cross-currents of a full belief that a policy of inaction in Ireland would be a crime against our people and at the same time a conviction that the new circumstances involved a loyal avoidance on our part of any course of action which could fetter Gladstone in the great experiment to which his last years were now pledged. There was a third undercurrent for which his attitude during the Spencer Coercion term had prepared me, and this time with a fuller intellectual assent than ever. Under the new conditions, even more necessarily than under the old, he intimated that he did not intend to compromise Gladstone's position by himself taking part in any agitation on the borderland of illegality in Ireland. There was even for the first time some hint of a physical illness which might disable him for the body-and-soul-racking ordeal of a semi-insurgent Irish struggle; and, with a consider-

ateness which was never missing, he accompanied his allusion to his own weakening powers with a gentle warning to myself to beware of laying too heavy a burden upon my emaciated frame.

But when he asked what I proposed we should do, and my reply was : " If your Bill is rejected, to put it in force ourselves in Ireland, and give as good as we get to every landlord and official of England who blocks the way," he made it plain that, in a programme of this sort, he was in absolute agreement with the men who might be prepared to suffer the penalties, provided always that crime or any extreme courses that would paralyse Gladstone in his crusade in Britain could be avoided. And this was what by a marvellous good fortune happened. The Parnell Bill which was contumeliously rejected by a majority of 95 a few nights afterwards was, by the Plan of Campaign struggle, made the law of the land throughout the winter for the protection of the homes of Ireland, and was in the following Session, in its substantial provisions, transferred to the English statute-book by the Coercion Ministers. And Parnell's injunction was so well-observed that the achievement, far from paralyzing Gladstone's arm, enormously strengthened it.

No sooner was I back in Dublin than it became manifest that the problem before us was how to restrain a people on the verge of desperation, rather than how to goad them into a No-Rent strike under the dictation of the Chicago Convention, according to the fanciful discovery of the English Coercionists. The resistance to eviction on the Clanricarde estate, which was to keep half Galway in a high fever for the next twenty years, had sprung up by an insuppressible instinct while Mr. Morley was Chief Secretary, to Mr. Morley's bitter annoyance, and regardless of the earnest expostulations of the Irish Party. The downfall of the Home Rule Government was the signal for a frantic raid by the vilest section of the landlords

upon the crops and homes of the most defenceless of the tenantry. The starving Achill islanders whom public charity had kept alive and supplied with seed potatoes found their miserable harvest torn from them to satisfy a demand for £1800 "rent," which was really so much charitable alms stolen from the poor-box. Eviction notices and sheriff's sales of the tenants' interest for a bid of £5 from the bailiff were everywhere falling like the bombshells of an invading army. An eminent personage from the West made a special journey to Dublin to deliver to me this appalling message: "You're going to have a Sicilian Vespers in Connacht this winter. You had better hurry up with some programme of your own, if you don't want the boys in L—— to begin the music." Still more specific warnings were showered upon me by deputations from the tenantry of the vast De Freyne estates in Roscommon, who waited upon me after an angry public demonstration which was more like the first lurid outflash of a revolution. At the meeting of the Organising Committee of the National League on the second next night, at which I presided, Mr. Dillon and Mr. Harrington gave reports no less alarming from meetings they had been addressing in other regions of the country. There was a universal consensus of opinion that night that the tenants must be provided with means of organised resistance conformable with the natural law, if not with English statutes, or the country must be abandoned to a *jacquerie*, ineffectual for protective purposes, but bloody enough to be destructive of all hope of a parliamentary appeal to England.

Hence "The Plan of Campaign." The instrument was drawn up by Harrington, whose experience of the legal intricacies of the wars between landlords and tenants was unequalled, and it was published in the next number of *United Ireland*, under the modest description of "A Memo. for the Country." The root-idea of "The Plan" was the daring proposal

that on each estate where a reasonable abatement was refused the tenants should club together to lodge the amount of their proffered rents in a common fund until the landlord should see the wisdom of accepting the bulk income thus temptingly collected for him, with the alternative of seeing the fund dwindling away under his eyes for the defence of any individual tenants who might be picked out for landlord vengeance, either by eviction, distraint, or the confiscation of his legal tenant right. The project was as simple as it was startling, and, given fidelity to one another among the tenantry, was inexpugnable by any of the known processes of landlord warfare ; nay, even its technical legality was so provokingly incontestable that *United Ireland* was able to publish a confidential opinion of the Attorney-General (Mr. Hugh Holmes) advising the Privy Council to fight shy of any attempt to impeach " the Plan " in a court of law.¹

It was at worst no more illegal than the Government's own despatch of General Sir Redvers Buller to Kerry to interview the most stubborn of the evicting landlords, and where remonstrance failed, to refuse them the forces of the Crown to carry out their clearances. Both were measures dictated by the supreme law of the safety of the people in a crisis which the Government first derided and were now driven to " pressure beyond the law " in an inglorious competition with the Plan of Campaign in order to keep within bounds. The unofficial Plan had the

¹ The following was the highly confidential " opinion " of the Attorney-General which he and his colleagues of the Privy Council were horrified to read in the columns of *United Ireland* on December 4th :

" There is a mode by which the landlord might get hold of the money " (lodged under the Plan) " which, of course, is not a matter for the Government, and I daresay the landlords will have good advice. *I do not see how any action can be taken by the Executive.* —Hugh Holmes, Attorney-General."

superior merit of extending over the thirty-two counties the protection which Sir Redvers Buller was only authorised to afford to one.¹ Moreover, the bare knowledge that a new weapon of immeasurable power in the tenants' defence had been discovered was sufficient to dispose the mass of the landlords—all but a few dozen desperadoes or bankrupts in the toils of English moneylenders—to come to reasonable terms with their tenantry, while the risks of eviction, prosecution and irremediable ruin which "The Plan" frankly insisted upon as among the possible prices to be paid for any general success made it certain that the dread weapon would only be resorted to upon estates where the people were driven to the last pitch of desperation, and where the justice of their claims would be their best armour of defence.

It would not be easy to find a precedent in any country for the fact that a document published anonymously in *United Ireland*, without any official authority from the national leader, should govern the course of events for the next three years, in defiance of a Ministry armed with the most ruthless Coercion Act in the whole arsenal of repressive legislation against Ireland, and should bring the Balfour reign of terror at the end of the ordeal to as well assured an overthrow as that of Earl Spencer, were it not for a catastrophe for which the Plan of Campaign had no more responsibility than for Heaven's lightnings or earthquakes. It was impossible to evoke Parnell's great name in view of his settled determination to maintain his personal intangibility as strictly as he had most wisely done throughout the Spencer years. There was no other national authority to be called in aid. The power of "The Party," in recent years erected into a tyranny which carried its own inexorable death-sentence, was unknown in those days of free initiative. "The Party"

¹ Kerry. Clare was afterwards added.

did not meet more than half-a-dozen times in a Session, and then mostly upon ceremonious occasions. More curiously still, the National League itself had no authoritative headship beyond an Organising Committee who were in 1883, once for all, arbitrarily selected to draw up a Constitution which never went any further. The six or eight members of the Organising Committee who were present when the outlines of the Plan of Campaign were determined upon were entirely at one as to policy, but shrank from promulgating it formally on their own authority, lest it should provoke the immediate suppression of the League. It was deemed wiser that the author of the document himself, being the chief executive officer of the League, should withhold his name from the publication. Michael Davitt, who was nominally one of the Hon. Secretaries of the League, as well as a member of the Organising Committee, had long before ceased to attend its meetings with any regularity. In the course of the three terrific years now before the country, as during the three years of the Spencer Coercion *régime*, his immense popular influence was lost on the only practical field of combat, owing to a mood of semi-detachment which was sometimes critical, but never unfriendly enough to prevent his chivalrous passion for the weak as against the strong from flaming forth at some unexpected moment.¹ But it was undeniably one of the deep discouragements of those desperate years that the energies of the founder of the Land League should be diverted to the establishment of a Democratic Labour League which flickered out after some not very helpful

¹ Davitt's critical aloofness was exacerbated by a series of ill-advised letters which Mr. T. P. O'Connor was officially employed to supply to the American Press every week, from London, in which undue emphasis was laid upon Davitt's criticisms, and persistent and quite unjust insinuations made of a design to undermine the leadership of Parnell.

activities, and should finally be transferred to London in the service of an English socialistic cause, which, whatever its merits, was not Ireland's.

Under such circumstances the men who committed themselves to the Plan of Campaign volunteered for a forlorn hope with the full knowledge that they carried their lives in their hands, and with a cheerful readiness to be repudiated if their call to the country for new and unheard-of sacrifices should prove too much for a people exhausted by a ten years war, ending, as it threatened to end, in an agrarian situation as bad as that of 1879 and an overwhelming disaster for Home Rule. One new asset, however, there was, and it was a treasure beyond price. The newly elected Party gave us a band of comrades whom it is as wine in the blood to remember in the first glow of a patriotism which laughed at danger and a friendship that knew no breath of disenchantment. It was no longer the pitting of two or three Athanasiuses against the world. There were dozens of Spartan comrades eager to share the speech-making, the writing, the fighting, the suffering ; to go anywhere and obey any orders without the sense of obeying anything except their own best instincts, and to accept the consequences with as joyous a welcome for the thunders as for the sunshine.

Mr. John Dillon was the most considerable accession to our strength. His long seclusion from the fray was soon forgotten in gratitude for the reinforcement he brought to the popular forces, what with his old gift for enkindling a crowd with a vibrant eloquence of his own, plain, but aglow with fiery suggestions, and his still more valuable capacity for interesting himself, with the minuteness of an unofficial Blue Book, in the affairs of hundreds of parishes and in the personality of their village captains, and for administering vast public funds with systematic precision and with a prudent economy. To aid in restoring his prominence in public affairs was one of the most delightful of duties

to one like myself, who thought I saw in his high probity of character, in his romantic personality, and, indeed, in those very excesses of an "unconstitutionalism" bordering on flat rebellion which in the 'Eighties were his most salient characteristics, qualities second only—although always and immeasurably second—to those of Parnell among contemporary Irish Nationalists. It may be safely claimed that no other living man laboured so assiduously or so fondly as the present writer in ensuring for him the most propitious opportunities for developing these qualities to the utmost limits of his capacity. If events proved that estimates which are still true of his capabilities as a lieutenant were sadly extravagant when they came to be applied to the responsible leader of a race, it remains one of my solaces in life that to the last minute of the last hour when success was possible for him, as the successor of an irreplaceable national leader, to enhearten him and sustain him continued to be for me a personal luxury, as well as a patriotic duty.

The current belief in England that the Plan of Campaign was the product of Mr. Dillon's brain was, however, as far astray as English judgments about Ireland usually are. Although he was present at the meeting of the Organising Committee when the outlines of the proposal were under discussion, he so far failed to grasp the vitalising principle of the project—which was the lodgment of the accumulated rents in a common defence fund—that, at the first great meeting of the Clanricarde tenants after the publication of the Plan, he dismayed us all by ignoring this proviso altogether and reverting to the old half-hearted method of making a levy of a shilling in the pound on the tenants' valuation. Harrington was so much alarmed lest the misapprehension should spread and nullify the entire movement that, under the modest heading, "Observations by the Author of the Plan," he published in the next number of *United Ireland*

this sharp commentary : " To fund the money is an indispensable condition of success. I must own I have nothing but contempt for the stupid efforts which are indicated by raising Defence Funds on a shilling in the £, or some such tax. These are merely Landlord Defence Funds, for he knows if he can only hold out the money subscribed will eventually go to him in the shape of law costs." For a moment, it seemed as if the success of the Plan were compromised at the start ; but the mistake was due to Mr. Dillon's characteristic slowness in assimilating new ideas, and at the next meeting of the League he put an end to all doubt about his position by the unequivocal declaration that from conversations he had with the tenants through the country he " was convinced that upon any estate where the tenants follow the Plan of Campaign as laid down in *United Ireland* and follow it loyally, they were masters of the situation." The shilling in the £ half measure was heard of no more.

" The Plan " had, indeed, already struck deep root in the confidence of the country. *The Times* made its unfailing contribution to our success by bragging on November 13th that " the League is beaten and broken "—that the rents were being paid up with unheard-of punctuality—that " already the conviction that the power of the League is passing away has been widely diffused "—that land-grabbing would become an active trade again, " as soon as it is shown that the dictation of the League is no longer supported by the extraneous mechanism of terror and outrage "—and that " men of means will soon largely take the place of the unsolvent and unenterprising tenants." In blunter English, that we were face to face with a huge conspiracy of the vilest traders on the poverty of the community—the land-grabber and gombeenman—to " take the places " of the 538,000 Irish tenants whose rents Sir James Caird declared to be " practically irrecoverable by anybody," and that " the power of

the League " alone stood between the country and that tremendous scheme of eviction and robbery. *The Times* even went the length of " offering a reward for the disclosure of a single instance in which the tenants of any large property in Ireland " would be guided by the counsels of *United Ireland*. Before a month was over, English foresight in Irish affairs was once more exemplified by the adoption of the Plan of Campaign on the vast estates of Lord Lansdowne in Queen's County, the Hon. Mr. Ponsonby in County Cork, The O'Grady in Limerick, Lord Dillon in Mayo, Lord de Freyne in Roscommon, and Mr. Brookes in Wexford ; League " rent offices " for the collection of the reduced rental were beginning to be an institution ; the lodgments were safely transferred to Paris through the treasurership of Biggar until the landlords should recover their sanity ; the difficulty soon came to be how to limit our liabilities by discouraging all but the most defenceless of the bodies of tenantry who were clamouring for protection.

The Ministry were the first to testify to the substantial equity of " The Plan " by entering themselves into a violent competition with it for popular favour. Sir Redvers Buller was sent to Kerry with a wildly unlawful but wholly benign commission described by himself as one to exercise " a certain amount of coercive power on a bad tenant, and a very strong coercive power on a bad landlord." In his evidence before the Cowper Commission, that bluff soldier burst out : " I do think the rents are too high," and out of the mouth of the Government's own Balaam gave an immortal benediction to the work of the League in answers such as this : " Nobody did anything for the people until the League was established. Unfortunately the tenants had been led to think that the law was only on one side ; they were an ignorant poor people who thought the law should look after them, instead of which it had only looked after the

rich." Sir Redvers ranged over his satrapy like an armoured Knight of the Round Table, doing the summary justice of a benevolent despot, putting down the Moonlighters on the one side with a strong hand, and dispensing with the law without scruple, whenever necessary, even to the length of refusing police protection to the evicting landlords, until he was first satisfied that the evictions were founded in justice.¹ The County Court Judge (Mr. John Adye Curran), who had obtained his Judgeship by services of a somewhat sinister character to Dublin Castle, was sent down to second Sir Redvers Buller's "very strong coercive power on the bad landlords" by a no less brazen defiance of a bad law from the law's own judgment seat. Here are a few specimens of how he exercised his dispensing power: "I will stop costs and give you twenty per cent. off your rents"—"I will strike out the half year's rent due to September as irrecoverable"—"I will bring down the rent from £40 to £19"—"What is the use of talking nonsense about arrears? You cannot get blood from a turnip." All outrageously illegal and all magnificently just. Between the General's Lynch law and the Judge's no less revolutionary vigour in driving coaches-and-four

¹ From the secret archives of General Buller's headquarters in Killarney *United Ireland* extracted, and on October 23rd published, the following telegraphic communications between Sub-Sheriff Gale and County Inspector Moriarty, the General's chief executive officer:

"Cork, October 14th. 2.15 p.m.

"To County Inspector, Killarney.

"Direct four police meet bailiff—Ballyvourney Barrack—four o'clock to-morrow morning. Gale."

(Reply.) "Memo. 552-1198.

"D.M.'s Office, Killarney. 14.10.86.

"When you require protection in future you must give me ten days notice to enable police inquiries to be made; *and you must invariably give the names of the defendants and nature of the legal proceedings. The application in annexed wire cannot be granted.*

"T. Moriarty, C.I., R.I.C.

"The Sub-Sheriff, Cork."

through Acts of Parliament, Kerry, which was becoming a hot-bed of agrarian crime—and precisely because it was at the head of the black list of agrarian crime—soon became a paradise of good government, where even the worst of the bad landlords were only too happy to accept their rents *minus* the abatements fixed by the governmental dictators. By some curious oversight, the Government failed to realise that by their success in Kerry in exacting abatements greater than those contemplated in Parnell's Bill and by methods avowedly more contemptuous of the technical law of the land than the Plan of Campaign proposed, they were putting themselves hopelessly in the wrong and the Plan of Campaign triumphantly in the right in the thirty-one other counties for whose case they declined to furnish any but "the ever-failing and the ever-poisonous remedy of Coercion."

Lord Salisbury—the Lord Salisbury of the Newport speech and touter for the Irish vote—might well thunder against the "criminal conspiracy," the "organised embezzlement," which proposed to extend to the remainder of the country the benevolent despotism which had wrought miracles in Kerry. Mr. Morley's observation (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, p. 373) is: "'What they call a conspiracy now,' said one of the insurgent leaders, 'they will call an Act of Parliament next Session.' So it turned out." I was only uttering a prophecy which I knew was not likely to be belied by events.

CHAPTER XI

SUCCESS AND AN UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY (1886)

United Ireland was now in the full tide and torrent of its power. It had a steady weekly circulation of 75,000 to 100,000 copies, meaning not far from 500,000 readers, in addition to a circulation for its literary sister publication, *The Shamrock*, which by this time seldom fell below 50,000. It may be to the discredit of Irish soft-heartedness that the high-water mark of the sales of *United Ireland* should be reached with the number that presented a coloured portrait of Gladstone (the circulation passed 125,000, and was only stopped by the failure of the litho machines to deliver any more), but the fact is, to my thinking, a much more scathing commentary upon England's incapacity either to gauge Irish feeling or to repay it. To the wonder of all beholders a journal whose every number might be its last and every member of its staff a prisoner—which had no capital except Parnell's signature for an overdraft on the Hibernian Bank—whose overdraft mounted to £3000 during the years while it was wrestling for its life against innumerable suppressions, jailings, and prosecutions, civil and criminal—had not only cancelled its indebtedness to the Bank, but was attaining a commercial prosperity which its founders would have hailed with grisly laughter, had it been foretold to them. In the year we have now reached, I find that following the Auditor's annual report, I was able to forward a cheque for £2000 to Parnell for the national funds and to leave a considerable sum to our credit in the Hibernian Bank.

But it was a prosperity built upon the crust of a volcano. Every number contained ample material for prosecutions for sedition, for libels (all the worse for being well-founded) upon powerful officers of State and great landowners, and open and calculated defiance of all law which was not of the people's making, or at choice for the summary suppression and breaking up of types and machinery with which the Castle never hesitated to visit more defenceless Nationalist journals. We were now faced with a never-ending Coercion code, under which it was calculated that, as the responsible publisher, I incurred penalties extending over 1500 years of imprisonment, had the Coercionists consistently enforced their own law in all its rigour. Had *United Ireland* been suppressed *manu militari* when it promulgated the Plan of Campaign, or during the next following months while it was uncompromisingly preaching it to the country, it was not to be doubted that a quite legitimately commercial newspaper like *The Freeman's Journal* must have instantly ceased to report the meetings and the speeches by which the contagion was spread, and the history of the next five years might have been one of practically uncontested sway for "firm and resolute government"—uncontested, that is to say, except by a no less "firm and resolute" *régime* of bullets and dynamite.

Maybe we were spared because the new Chief Secretary, Sir M. Hicks-Beach, underrated the influence of *United Ireland* with the country, and believed, as even some of our own disheartened colleagues were whispering, that we "were flogging a dead horse"; maybe his Dublin Castle advisers were rather disposed, from gruesome experiences of their own, to give him exaggerated forewarnings against treading again the bitter Calvary of Forster and Spencer. Our hopes of immunity during the incubation of the new movement were, at all events, based

upon audacity and ever-increasing audacity in assailing a government bereft of the smallest moral authority or consent from the governed—upon a fairly well-known recklessness as to personal consequences—and upon the knowledge that the paper spoke with the unconquerable strength of a race, both for many thousands of peasants for whose cabins it offered a trustier protection than the blunderbuss of the old agrarian wars, and for the young generation for whom it was for the moment the vanguard and the hottest fire-centre of the deathless battle against the power of England.

That was not all. The newer generation, with youth's happy gift for imagining themselves the discoverers of America, will not, I hope, be over-shocked to find most of their new world shining in the pages of *United Ireland* more than a quarter of a century ago. Our opening number contained, as one of its special features, the first of a series of papers on "Irish trade for the Irish towns," by one who has since made his mark in the history of the Irish Industrial movement, Mr. T. P. Gill. Peter O'Leary, the forerunner of the prophets of the Irish Labourers in a wilderness where there was then naught but camel's hair and wild honey for their portion, had a column to himself in which to expound those claims of labour which are now in everybody's mouth. The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in our pages, and might never have grown to maturity under the blight of many foes without the special department which was placed weekly at the disposal of its founder, Michael Cusack. One of the earliest enthusiasts of the Gaelic Language League was among our constant contributors. *Nec deerant epulis rosæ*. Even in the clash of arms while, like William of Deloraine, we had to

"Carve at the meal with gloves of steel

And drink the red wine through the helmet barr'd," the dainty charms of literature were not altogether unworshipped. A series of exquisite Irish historical

cameos which might well be disinterred for the students of a happier day, was contributed by young Justin Huntly McCarthy. Our nest of singing birds and romancists contained not a few of those who were the pride of an older day, or are the joy of a later springtime—Charles Kickham, “Finola,” T. C. Irwin, Frank Fahy, Rose Kavanagh, Ethna Carbery, Katherine Tynan, Una Taylor (daughter of the famous author of *Philip van Artevelde*), P. J. McCall, Charlotte O’Brien, Dora Sigerson, John Augustus O’Shea, Edmund Leamy, and many another of the bright company of *étoiles qui filent*.

Thus fortified with all that could impart the benediction of a nation, *United Ireland* acted with a boldness which no newspaper, except John Mitchel’s, ever approached before or since, openly and of set purpose, on the principle that the only way of obtaining good laws for Ireland was by breaking bad ones. We did not hesitate to exhort juries, and with entire success, to “make true deliverance” between the Crown and its victims in the spirit in which the London jurors acquitted the Seven Bishops, rather than with any regard for the technicalities of venal Crown Prosecutors; nay, we instigated the Royal Irish Constabulary themselves to imitate General Buller’s “dispensing power” in their own department by throwing down their rifles if called upon to assist in iniquitous evictions—advice, doubtless, punishable whenever the Government chose, with any penalty from penal servitude to the sharp services of a firing platoon. And still the firm and resolute Chief Secretary made no sign, but like all the Chief Secretaries, began with a speech balmily undertaking “to wipe out the very recollection of Gladstone’s Home Rule or of Parnell’s Suspension of Evictions Bill from the Irish mind.”

The first of the “Low-Rent Offices” was held by Mr. Dillon and myself at Portumna early in November and it was a portent the amazing character of which

those of a later generation can little realise. "The November rent-office" of my first experiences in the West was for the Irish peasant a tribunal as full of dread as was the torture chamber of the Three Inquisitors for the prisoners of the Venetian *Pozzi*. The famished wretches stood shivering for hours in the winter blast, waiting their turn to be admitted one by one to the place of agony, where the agent sat awaiting them at his table with a loaded revolver beside him, and "the rent-warner's" sinister figure, more menacing than the revolver, loomed up Abhorson-like out of the gloom. There was not the mere question of rent to be settled, but the tenant's soul to be laid bare and subjected to unimaginable torments and humiliations. Even if he could wring out of the twisted handkerchief which answered him for a purse the last crown of a rack-rent which the law courts have since pronounced to be the meanest form of thievery, he had still to answer the cross-examination of the rent-warner as to how much he had received for the little yearling at the last fair, how many bonhams had come with the last litter, how much the first out-crop of the reclaimed strip of mountain had fetched, in order to decide whether an increase of rent might not be judiciously clapped on. Did he contemplate marriage, he had to petition for the consent of the agent by a trembling disclosure of the name of the girl of his choice, the amount of her "fortune," the value of the beds or household furniture she would bring to the cabin. Was it his son he was going to settle down, the inquisitors were more merciless still in cutting off the most precious pound of flesh for the profit of the Estate in the transaction. Had he forgotten the rent-warner's "duty" goose at Michaelmas, or awakened his greed for the reclaimed patch of land, or had his son ruffled the august man's dignity by a saucy answer to some insolent order for "duty-work" (that is to say, unpaid slave labour), or was it a widow

who hesitated at the order to send her fair-haired child out to service at "the big house"—the rent-warner's power of life and death was no less deadly effective than the agent's. A scowl on the brow of the one or the other might mean a doubled rent, or a six months ejectment notice, at the expiration of which, even without a farthing of rent unpaid, a man might be evicted from the home of his fathers and of his children, the fields his own labour and money had fertilised torn from him to become the prey of some landgrabber or "big bullock-man," and he and his swept out of sight into the workhouse or the hold of an emigrant ship. They toiled, they starved, they cringed, with as little thought of resistance as their asses had of holding out for the principles of the French Revolution. How often have I seen every act of the tragedy with aching eyes! And how lightly the free children of such bondsmen now estimate the revolution which has struck off their chains!

Such being the traditions, who will picture the feelings of the agent and the rent-warner that day at Portumna? The agent—a Mr. Frank Joyce, a genial young country gentleman who was new to the trade, and soon quitted it with the disgust of a tiger-hunter set to trap mice—was enthroned in his tabernacle, a repeating rifle slung across his shoulders; the rent-warner still held his ground like an Abhorson summoned to his own execution; armed policemen hovered around the door in more than their old profusion; but the four thousand Clanricarde tenants who would once have obeyed the rent-warner's notice as fatalistically as the blast of the Last Trumpet—where were they? They were marching in by all the country roads, with banners flying, to the crashing music of that newest aid to rent-collecting—a brass band; but they marched past Mr. Frank Joyce's empty rent office with a scornful roll of kettle-drums, straight to the hotel where Mr. Dillon and I were

awaiting them. A deputation of the Estate Committee was selected to present the tenants' ultimatum offering the rents, less the moderate abatement of 25 per cent. The agent's instructions from the noble Marquis in London were an iron *non possumus*. Where he would once have seen his bondsmen grovelling on their knees for mercy, he now found men as stiff and grim as his own repeating rifle. "I suppose that means war?" was their spokesman's last word. "I'm damn sorry, I suppose it does," was Mr. Frank Joyce's queer answer, spoken with the resignation of an abdicating monarch in presence of the pikeheads of his revolted lieges. That ended Lord Clanricarde's last rent-audit! The deputation returned to the hotel, where Mr. Dillon and myself, with a staff of clerks, opened a rent-office of our own, and for the next five hours we went through a scene as tempestuous as a revolution, and yet one thrilling with an infinite pathos akin to tears, while hundreds of frieze-coated tenants clamoured and fought for admittance, and to strangers only known to them by a mystic faith confided the little rolls of dirty bank-notes which represented their all, so truly were they aflame with the first raptures of Liberty, even while the thud of the evictors' battering ram shattering their children's homes was already filling their vivid Gaelic imagination with presages of landlord vengeance. Mr. Frank Joyce was departing under police escort, not having received rent enough to defray his car hire, while we were leaving for the night mail train for Dublin with a black bag full of money, through streets where almost every window was illuminated and to the strains of the immortal brass band which had that day sounded "The Last Post" of feudalism in Connacht.

Ditto, ditto, a few days afterwards in Ballaghaderin upon the swarming boglands of Lord Dillon, whose cottier population of 20,000 were only barely able to live on from famine to famine out of their earnings

as migrants to the English harvest-fields, and whose rents were in reality a blackmail of £25,000 a year levied by an absentee landlord out of their wages in England. Again the long procession of emancipated serfs from all the country roads, again the boycott of the official rent-office ; only this time our " Low Rent Offices " were not two, but four, and the fever ran higher than ever as the news went round that the Government had struck their first blow—*telum imbelli sine ictu*—by serving Mr. Dillon with a citation to the Queen's Bench to offer sureties for the peace as " a barater and person of ill fame " under the enlightened Act of King Edward the Third. Our meeting at Ballaghaderin was, I think, the first at which an eminent ecclesiastic—it was the Rev. Denis O'Hara, the Administrator and bosom friend of the venerable Bishop of Achonry—took the responsibility of presiding. By this time the hold of " The Plan " upon the country was no longer doubtful. Ecclesiastics of the highest rank recognised in it a bloodless and substantially equitable means of enacting for the salvation of the people the legislation the English Parliament had in vain been prayed to provide. There sprang up a wild demand for Members of Parliament like " Willie " Redmond in Mayo, James O'Kelly in Roscommon, Matt Harris and John Roche in Galway, Tom Mayne in Wexford, William Lane, James Gilhooly, and Dr. Tanner in Cork, and Arthur O'Connor in Queen's County to instal themselves in the functions of the superseded land agents ; there they sat day after day, dozens of them, in the midst of their receipt-books and ledgers and piles of bank-notes and coin, discharging their novel duties with such conscientious care that not a pound of the moneys thus tumultuously collected failed to be safely stowed away, or to be produced when the landlords (as was already commonly happening) awakened to the advantages of being saved the whole expense and worry of rent

collection and thankfully accepted out of the Campaign war-chest a larger proportion of their rental than a court of equity would have awarded them, or any eviction campaign, however savage, have enabled them to realise.

On one of the early days of December I received a telegram from Parnell begging me to meet him in London upon an urgent confidential matter. His pallor when we last met, together with certain hints in the papers, led me to apprehend that some serious deterioration of his health must be in question. The next morning I was exploring the South Eastern district in a hansom in search of the address named in the telegram—one of those commonplace George Streets or Bridge Streets which are sprinkled all over London by the dozen and baffle even the erudition of the cabman. Some necessary particular must have been forgotten by the transmitter. The only clue was that the telegram was handed in at the Greenwich office. For many hours, accordingly, we ranged all over that district until cabby's horse began to give out and his own suspicions to be awakened. A call at the house of Parnell's secretary (Mr. Henry Campbell, M.P.) yielded no information as to the whereabouts of the address named. The wintry day had already darkened when, having in desperation called at a police station for information, I learned that we were at Eltham. The name gave me an unpleasant start, resolutely though I had shut out any belief in the tittle tattle which Parnell's enemies of the more venomous sort had associated with it. The case was however, becoming too desperate for hesitation. The station-sergeant I found familiar with Captain O'Shea's address, and thither I proceeded, sending in my card and the telegram to Captain O'Shea, with a request for assistance in locating the address therein named. I was shown into the drawingroom, only to be informed, after some delay, that Captain O'Shea was not

at home, and that when Mrs. O'Shea last heard from Mr. Parnell his address was at some nursing home on the Kent Road, the exact number of which she had forgotten. The cabman brusquely told me he must go home, and asked me almost threateningly was I aware how much his fare was ?

To my relief as well as surprise I found a commissionaire had reached the Westminster Palace Hotel before me with an unsigned letter from Parnell, expressing his regret that the appointment had, owing to some misunderstanding, miscarried, and asking me to meet him at half-past ten the following morning on the walk at the back of the Greenwich Observatory leading towards the river. In Greenwich Park I found myself, accordingly, at the appointed hour in a clammy December mist that froze one to the bone, and left little visible except the ugly carcass of the Observatory. After groping around helplessly before even discovering the river-side of the monster, I suddenly came upon Parnell's figure emerging from the gloom in a guise so strange and with a face so ghastly that the effect could scarcely have been more startling if it was his ghost I had met wandering in the eternal shades. He wore a gigantic fur cap, a shooting-jacket of rough tweed, a knitted woollen vest of bright scarlet, and a pair of shooting or wading boots reaching to the thighs—a costume that could not well have looked more bizarre in a dreary London park if the object had been to attract, and not to escape observation. But the overpowering fascination lay in the unearthly, half-extinguished eyes flickering mournfully out of their deep caverns, the complexion of dead clay, the overgrown fair beard, and the locks rolling down behind almost to the shoulders. It was the apparition of a poet plunged in some divine anguish, or a mad scientist mourning over the fate of some forlorn invention.

“ Good God, Parnell, what induced you to trust

yourself out in this infernal place upon such a morning ? ” was my first cry of horror.

“ Oh,” he replied, with the smile, like a wintry sun, with which he was always able to waive off ill-fortune, “ I am all right. But, I have been ill—very ill.”

“ My cab is still here. Let us drive to my hotel or anywhere else you please out of this murderous fog.”

“ I’ve seen as bad on the Wicklow hills. Nobody will observe us here.”

There was not a human being to be seen in the clammy solitude except an outcast, too penniless for a doss-house, who was enjoying the icy hospitalities of one of the park benches. As we walked up and down, we were soon too deep in more absorbing concerns to notice how the hours were flying and the frozen blast eating into our bones.

He came straight to business. The Liberals were alarmed at the Plan of Campaign, and so was he. The Old Man had been specially shocked by a speech of Mr. Dillon—at Castlerea, if my memory serves—in which he announced that he and his friends were carefully taking a note of every resident magistrate, police officer, and Government official, who now distinguished himself against the people, and, as soon as the Liberals came back, would settle accounts with every man of them. This threat must be withdrawn or there must be a break with the Liberal alliance. He spoke of Mr. Dillon with a vehement bitterness for which I was little prepared, and when I remonstrated, in terms of warm defence of his single-mindedness, retorted, somewhat tartly : “ Yes, if a man does not intend mischief, he never understands that he is doing it.” Had we not agreed that nothing must happen in Ireland that would fetter the Old Man in his appeal to England ? Assuredly, was the reply ; the question was whether the resistance in Ireland on our lines was not the only means of giving Gladstone

a dog's chance with the English electorate? Was it certain that he did not himself realise that? If he did not, every message that reached us from the Liberal camp was strangely misleading.

It soon became evident that up to that moment Parnell had had no personal communication with Gladstone, and that, as has now been divulged, Mr. Morley was in reality his only informant as to the trend of Liberal feeling. It was no less clear that in the seclusion of an exhausting illness, he had grown unacquainted with much that was happening in Ireland, and in his feverish condition was unduly excited by a message from one whose Chief Secretaryship had been distinguished by a nervous sensitiveness to the failings of Irishmen and a doubtless quite unconscious tenderness for their detractors. There were one or two indications also of the influence of a silly article in *The Times* intimating that "Mr. Dillon's energy is to be accounted for by the fact that a section of the party of disorder have been always jealous of Mr. Parnell's ascendancy." In some such terms as these I put my own view of the matters that disquieted him: "There is not, and must never be, any real cause for misunderstanding between you and me. You are the supreme judge of policy. Once your mind is made up, I should sooner annihilate myself than cross you. So, I am convinced, would Dillon and Harrington. But, first, I beg of you, go to the fountain-head for information as to how Gladstone's thoughts are really working. We are filibusters in this adventure and are content to carry our lives in our hands. We don't want to commit him any more than you. By all means let both of you keep the road open for repudiation if we break down. But, he dare not refuse to be frank with you in an emergency of this kind. If you are both genuinely persuaded we are doing mischief, it is not yet too late to pull up. No eviction has taken place. Not a pound of the

collected rents has been spent. Dillon has not yet decided whether he will obey the Queen's Bench order to give securities. If he refuses and is locked up, and if I resign the charge of *United Ireland*, as I shall gladly do, to anybody you name, the movement will quietly fizzle out."

"That," he said, "would be madness for you and for me and for the country. In our family we do not use the word 'madness' lightly. All I propose is that you should set bounds to your operations, or we shall be bankrupted and the Liberals will shake us off."

"That is a perfectly feasible proposition. Limitation to a few typical estates in each county is the mainspring of all our plans. We find already there is not one landlord in fifty whom the mere whisper of the Plan of Campaign in his neighbourhood will not bring to terms. But if once it leaked out that we were restricted to a few sham fights, the frank abandonment of the entire venture would be fairer to the campaigners and to the country. The landlords would at once stiffen up and concentrate their whole force on the destruction of a few thousand victims. Rightly or wrongly, I took it for granted when we met here after the Chicago Convention that you desired (for most excellent reasons of State) to leave us as free a hand in Ireland as during the Spencer struggle, and did not want to be pestered for advice about this or that fiddle-faddle. And do recollect, Parnell, in fairness to us all that you had nothing but good-will for the main purpose of our programme, which was to put your Bill into practical force in Ireland if it was rejected in the House of Commons. That is just what we are marvellously well succeeding in doing, without a single deed of violence that should shock the most old-maidenly of Liberals. Give us a free rein for the rest of the winter, and in a great phrase of your own, the tenants will 'keep a firm grip

of their homesteads ' to such effect that, excepting the estates of a handful of lunatics like Clanricarde, you will have the landlords themselves clamouring the loudest to regularise the Plan of Campaign by passing your Bill next Session, and, better still, to expand Gibson's Purchase Bill into one for giving Landlordism what Gladstone called ' opulent obsequies.' We never had such a chance."

" My dear O'Brien, your spectacles ought to be coloured rose. You expect too much from human nature."

" May it not sometimes be a surer way of getting the best out of human nature than expecting too little ? "

" I never generalise. The farmers had the chance of their lives in the No Rent days and they left us in the lurch. So they will leave you when they hear the crack of a sharp Coercion Act in their ears. You won't get the Nonconformist to stomach the plan for fighting the landlords with their own rents. Neither will you get the priests."

I was able to startle him with the information (which owing to his long sequestration in a sick-room was new to him) that one of the foremost of the Irish Prelates had already extended a benediction to our struggle, and that powerful priests were beginning to take an active part in marshalling the tenantry into the " Low Rent Offices."

He shook his head. " That is all very well until the day is going against you."

I burst into a hot eulogy of the priests as the saving salt and savour of Irish life.

His reply is eternally engraven in my memory. " Yes, the Irish priests, individually, are splendid fellows, but in a semi-revolutionary movement like ours a time comes sooner or later when a priest has to choose between Rome and Ireland, and he will always choose Rome. I hear Norfolk is busy in Rome already."

He put his finger on the weak spot in the Plan of Campaign. "What are you to do for money? You will never succeed in collecting your rents for a second year. The first exploit of your Mr. Dillon in the Land League year was to get the rich Limerick farmers on the Cloncurry estate to throw up their dairy-farms, and they have been a millstone around our necks ever since. As soon as the landlords begin evicting, you will have a dozen Cloncurry estates on your hands. How are you going to feed them?"

"There, of course, you have hit the blot. The Plan was only devised as an expedient for one winter. If we can force the Government to do for Ireland what they have sent General Buller to do for Kerry, next Session will see the end of the conflict. If the landlords should then proceed to evict the campaigned estates, it will be for sheer vengeance, and we can count upon no end of funds from America to resist and punish them. The risks have to be taken. Our first duty is to our own people. Will our Liberal friends be much the happier if we leave Ireland a corpse on Lord Salisbury's dissecting table? Will they prefer to call in the Moonlighters?"

"I'm not quite sure whether they may not," Parnell grimly interjected.

Whereupon I am afraid I stormed at the bare suggestion of a hypocrisy which could split hairs about the morality of the Plan of Campaign, and see more comfort in a bloodier background, or, more vilely still, look to a bloodstained Ireland as a pretext for ridding the Liberal Party of its Home Rule incubus. But I refused absolutely to do the meanest of the Liberal wirepullers the wrong of such a supposition, and again entreated Parnell to put the matter beyond doubt by claiming a definite intimation of Gladstone's own views in the emergency. If all our advices were not astray, he and all the live men of his Home Rule crusade (with the possible exception of Mr. Morley)

would watch with a not unsympathetic eye a struggle which would once more illustrate the incapacity of the Westminster Parliament to enact honest legislation for Ireland unless under revolutionary pressure, and the powerlessness of Coercion to take the place of just government.

Parnell was manifestly relieved to be informed of the spirit in which the Plan of Campaign movement had been originated, and in particular, perhaps, to find that, of the two members of the Party of whom he was beginning to entertain a settled distrust, one was potential chiefly by the multiplicity of his speeches, and the other had, to my own deep regret, ceased to interfere actively at all. We without difficulty arrived at an agreement that the Castlereagh threat should be without fracas explained away, that upon eight or ten estates definitely named where the Plan of Campaign was already in operation (which, to the best of my recollection, were the Clanricarde, De Freyne, Dillon, Ponsonby, Brooke, Massereene, Mitchelstown, and, I think, Vandeleur estates), the movement was to be prosecuted with unabated vigour, but that no new estate was to be accepted for entrance into the combination, unless under special circumstances where other powerful landlords might take advantage of the limitation of the struggle to combine for the extermination of the occupants of the campaigned estates. And this agreement was, in all substantial particulars, observed throughout all the subsequent years.

Mr. Morley's version of the above transaction (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, pp. 370-371) may here be usefully quoted.

"December 7, 1886. Mr. Parnell called, looking very ill and worn. He wished to know what I thought of the effect of the plan of campaign upon public opinion. 'If you mean in Ireland,' I said, 'of course I have no view, and it would be worth nothing if I had. In England, the effect is wholly bad; it offends

almost more even than outrages.' He said he had been very ill and had taken no part, so that he stands free and uncommitted. He was anxious to have it fully understood that the fixed point in his tactics is to maintain the alliance with the English Liberals. He referred with much bitterness, and very justifiable too, to the fact that when Ireland seemed to be quiet some short time back, the government had at once begun to draw away from all their promises of remedial legislation. If, now, rents were paid, meetings abandoned, and newspapers moderated, the same thing would happen over again as usual. However, he would send for a certain one of his lieutenants, and would press for an immediate cessation of the violent speeches.

"December 12. Mr. Parnell came, and we had a prolonged conversation. The lieutenant had come over, and had defended the plan of campaign. Mr. Parnell persevered in his dissent and disapproval, and they parted with the understanding that the meetings should be dropped, and the movement calmed as much as could be. I told him that I had heard from Mr. Gladstone, and that he could not possibly show any tolerance for illegalities."

That the maintenance of the Liberal alliance—or to be more precise, the determination to give Gladstone's appeal to Britain the most patient and generous fair play—was the fixed point of the policy of Parnell and of us all is, of course, a truism. That had been already sufficiently established by the story of the Chicago Convention. Parnell had certainly given me the impression, if it matters much, that the conversation originated with Mr. Morley, and not with himself. The above extracts now make it clear that, as I had suspected, Parnell had not been in communication with Gladstone at all on the subject and that the *obiter dictum*, "in England, the effect" (of the Plan of Campaign) "is wholly bad; it offends almost more even than outrages." came wholly from Mr. Morley him-

self. The wisdom of the oracle may be sufficiently estimated from the fact that the Plan of Campaign struggle was for the next three years enthusiastically participated in by nearly all the best men, women, and newspapers of the Liberal Party in the tumult of eviction scenes, and, some of them, in the cells of Irish jails; that Gladstone himself selected from one of the most tragic battlefields of the campaign the watchword, "Remember Mitchelstown," which carried the Liberal flag to victory from constituency to constituency in England, and that "the effect in England" was so "wholly bad" that nothing short of the cataclysm of the Divorce Court in 1890 could have prevented the struggle in Ireland from eventuating in an overpowering British majority for Home Rule.

Mr. Morley's extracts from the Liberal leader's own comment on his report of the Parnell interview is no less significant.

"Hawarden, *December 8, 1886.* I have received your very clear statement and reply in much haste for the post—making the same request as yours for a return. I am glad to find the ——— speech is likely to be neutralised. I hope effectually. It was really very bad. I am glad you write to ———. 2. As to the campaign in Ireland, I do not at present feel the force of Hartington's appeal to me to speak. I do not recollect that he ever spoke out about Churchill, of whom he is for the time the enthusiastic follower. 3. . . . Upon the whole I suppose he sees he cannot have countenance from us in the plan of campaign. *The question rather is how much disavowal.* I have contradicted a Tory figment in Glasgow that I had approved."

It is here obvious that, with Gladstone as with Parnell, the few injudicious sentences of the Castlereagh speech in their bearing upon a future Home Rule Bill, bulked more largely than the Plan of Campaign

in their anxieties.¹ It may be surmised that this will be made still clearer whenever the "letter to ——" which Gladstone was "glad you are writing" comes to see the light. The sentence, "Upon the whole I suppose he (Parnell) sees he cannot have countenance from us in the Plan of Campaign" seems to be in direct contradiction to the impression that Parnell himself "persisted in his dissent and disapproval," while Mr. Morley's report that Parnell and I "parted with the understanding that the meetings should be dropped" arose from a misunderstanding on his part so patent that I was obliged to leave London by the next morning's Irish mail to address a meeting of some thousands of people on the Clanricarde estate. "*The question rather is how much disavowal*" reveals the genuine touch of the Old Parliamentary Hand. He acknowledges no greater moral compulsion to lecture Irishmen than Lord Hartington did to lecture the Lord Randolph Churchill of the Belfast blood dance, just as in the graver emergency of 1890 he (as we now know from Lord Morley's amazing *Recollections*) would fain have put in the fire the "nullity" letter which brought to ruin the sublimest enterprise of his life. It is one more added to "The Three Sorrows of Irish Story-telling" that the Englishman whom Ireland, and Parnell as well, trusted more implicitly even than Gladstone should have been of all men he who in the one case as in the other sicklied over the old statesman's truer judgment with a timidity or a pagan virtue of his own, and in the later and more devastating case should have succeeded.

¹ The needlessness of Mr. Morley's alarms is placed beyond controversy by Gladstone's own record of his interview with Parnell in Hawarden a week or two afterwards, which does not contain the smallest allusion to the Plan of Campaign difficulty, but, on the contrary, as the result of a few hours' colloquy with the Irish leader, winds up with the exhilarating conclusion: "He is certainly one of the very best people to deal with that I have ever known." (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, p. 420.)

The opaque greenish-yellow fog was thickening into a darkness rendered all the gloomier by the tolling of the ships' bells in the river before our discussions, as we walked up and down the path behind the Observatory, were over. Then happened an incident too characteristic of an extraordinary man to be omitted. "Is your cab still outside?" Parnell asked. "Would you mind driving me into town?"

After all the elaborate precautions to conceal our meeting, and after spending hours which might well have given him his death-stroke parading a remote park under every possible discomfort in order to avoid observation in more frequented quarters, he jumped into the cab to dine with me in one of the most conspicuous venues in London—the French Room of the Criterion Restaurant. Was it an eccentricity? Was it perhaps the immense loneliness of a life dogged by incessant precautions?—a longing for companionship which made him burst through all fetters and safeguards in mere recklessness? He selected some trifle—*ris de veau* or the like—from the copious menu, with his customary pint of Rhine wine. It was impossible not to be deeply moved—not, indeed, to be frightened—at sight of his ashen face and the region of darkness under his eyes. He conversed with a greater communicativeness, in the intimate sense, than I can remember him ever to have done, speaking in gentle and caressing tones.

Traces of his talk during the evening until the last of the other diners had trickled out linger persistently in my memory. He had suffered much and long from some grave kidney trouble, as he gave me to understand, with all the horrors of insomnia supervening. But unlike most invalids, who are apt to cherish their ailments, he made no complaints, and entered into no particulars. It must have been some intolerable mental picture of his long and lonely sufferings that tempted me to say: "Good heavens, Parnell, it is

awful to think of you alone in a London lodging-house at such a time. Why on earth should you not get some lady of your family to come over and take care of you?" (How tragic the indiscretion was, all the world now knows.)

"We are a peculiar family," was his reply. "We are all very fond of one another, but, somehow, we do not get on so well when we are too much together. By the way," he broke out, "have you heard anything of late of my sister, Anna?" I had only heard that she had left Ireland to settle down in a painters' colony on the Cornwall coast. "She has never spoken a word to me since I stopped that account of the Ladies' Land League," he observed with a humorous gleam in his eye. "Anna might have been a great painter—she might be great in anything."

How truly he diagnosed the family mentality was proved when the sister who had never forgiven him in his days of power swooped to the defence of his memory after his death with a withering scorn for his foes, ere her own life of magnificent possibilities unsatisfied was characteristically closed in an attempt to swim her way through the breakers around the Cornwall cliffs in mid-winter in defiance of all warnings.

It was, I think, in this connection he made the observation: "Life is not supportable without the friendship of a woman, be she good or bad. Take even the Saints." And my surprise could not have been greater had he quoted from the *Vedas* or from the *Koran* when he instanced the cases of great and holy saints like St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, and St. Francis de Sales, who owed half the success of their divine work in the world to the collaboration of no less great and holy women. "You would never have got young men to sacrifice themselves for so unlucky a country as Ireland," he added with a smile, "only that they pictured her as a woman. That is what makes the risks worth taking."

Our chat turned on his own early life. He referred to his service in the Wicklow Militia and said he thought he was born to be a soldier, "but not under the English flag. I was too much my mother's son for that." If the Civil War had lasted much longer, he would have volunteered for the North. The Irish American officers who came over to organise the Fenian Rising in 1865, and whom he constantly met in his mother's house in Dublin, urged him to join them if war should break out over the Alabama claims. "That was the nearest I ever got to high treason. But somehow they and I did not hit it off, and England had the good sense to pay up." For the soul of Fenianism, as distinguished from Fenian military plans or planlessness, he entertained a lifelong reverence.

The glass veered to religion, or, as he preferred to put it, to "that something in life we don't understand and never will." That was as far as he would go in the way of dogmatic theology. But that there must be some presiding government in Nature he took for granted, since otherwise this world with all its beauty and its never-ending miseries would be too senseless even to be a diabolical practical joke. He went further, and, groping as we are in a mysterious ignorance, defended superstition—even his own fads about magpies and the number thirteen—as containing some modicum of truth.

"Don't you think the Apostles had just as lively a horror of the number thirteen the day after the Last Supper? I should never have burned the witches of old. Macbeth's mistake was not in consulting the witches, but in only believing the portion that pleased him in their advice. You never know in what strange quarters knowledge may be hidden. The foolishness of The Cross was the breath of life of Christianity."

His astronomical researches, modest though I presume them to have been, made him a firm believer in

the plurality of worlds, and even in their habitability. "Science will never do anything worth talking about until it gets outside this little world. I don't see why it should not, some day. Once inoculate a man with some virus that will enable him to support life in a new atmosphere, and a voyage to the planets or even to the stars won't be much more difficult than that of Columbus when he set out to discover America."

And from this unaccustomed height of speculation he drifted into the more congenial work of explaining, or rather soliloquising about, the ways and means of estimating the weights and distances of the planetary and starry worlds, and the reasons for inferring that they must all have generative powers as universally active as our own animal, vegetable, and mineral life. Feeling myself quite unsafe among those giddy mechanical immensities, I tried to recall him to more accessible latitudes by asking :

"Do you really believe that, even if science sails to the stars, it can ever in itself explain the mystery of life or its purpose?" His reply was: "I do not. The Irish peasant's faith makes him a happier man under his thatch than a man of science can ever be."

One other circumstance is worth recording as an instance of the power of detachment peculiar to the man. During our three or four hours table-talk, he did not revert, directly or indirectly, to the Plan of Campaign, or to the Castlereagh speech.

CHAPTER XII

A CHRISTMAS NIGHT IN THURLES (1886)

Mr. Dillon did not mention to me that he had received the letter from Mr. Morley. My first information on the subject came from Mr. Morley's book. However, he took Parnell's remonstrance in excellent part. A formal withdrawal of the Castlereagh speech was out of the question, but he did take care, in subsequent pronouncements, to attenuate any evil effect the threat to remember their misdeeds for Dublin Castle officials might have upon Englishmen when asked to entrust an Irish Parliament with power. He also readily accepted the limitations upon our activities suggested by Parnell, although he was as conscious as myself that to cripple our liberty of attack beforehand was gravely to endanger the battle. He had entered into recognisances with the Queen's Bench—to the amount of £2,000—under the Act of Edward the Third, and at the risk of forfeiting them he was free to repeat his offence all over again. It will be found in a moment, however, that less than a week after my return from London the Government abandoned their first feeble essay in Coercion for a series of resolute hammer-blows at the Plan of Campaign; and the coincidence was such as to raise a cogent suspicion that in some quite innocent manner, explained perhaps by his continued intimacy with Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour, Mr. Morley's hostility to the Plan of Campaign, and with it, the assumed hostility of Gladstone and Parnell, had reached the ears

of the Government and had stiffened them for : death-grapple with the "criminal conspiracy" before it enveloped the country in its tempest.

A day or two after my meeting with Parnell, Mr. Dillon and myself attended a meeting of large proportions in Loughrea to collect the rents of the western regions of the Clanricarde estate. After a public meeting of which the Bishop's Administrator was the Chairman, we opened four rent-offices, at which the two local members, Matt Harris and David Sheehy, and ourselves officiated. While we were in the high tide of our activities, verifying the lodgments and issuing receipts, a couple of hundred policemen, secretly mustered during the night, burst simultaneously and without warning into the four rooms, assaulted the members of Parliament, pounced with violence on every banknote, coin and document they could lay hands upon, without even going through the formality of exhibiting a warrant, and finally marched us all four to a Removable Magistrate's Court under an imposing escort of riflemen. What was intended for a majestic stroke of terrorism was, in accordance with our invariable tactics, turned into a scene of ridicule and contempt for the Castle terrorists. While the police were scuffling with the members of Parliament, the bulk of the moneys and documents were spirited away into safe quarters ; the bands marched with the prisoners, filling the air with their brazen alleluias ; the unfortunate tipsy District Inspector who led the assault was subjected by Matt Harris to a merciless chaffing on his thickness of speech and the treacherous hue of his nose ; after a formal remand, we were set free, for a festive evening at the delightful old Bishop's heart-warming board ; and the day which was to have cowed Loughrea into a wholesome awe of Sir M. Hicks Beach's first whiff of grapeshot wound up with general illuminations in the town and the thunder of half-a-dozen massed bands

around us as Mr. Dillon and myself left on an outside car to catch the midnight mail train at Athenry with the bulky black bag in which all but £200 of the day's rent-collection was comfortably packed away. Of one mishap on our own side we must in fairness make confession. Our driver's joy, like the unfortunate District Inspector's fluster, had sought satisfaction in excessive whiskey, and he very nearly ended the Plan of Campaign struggle by rushing his steed and himself and ourselves against a stone wall, and laying us prostrate on the roadway in the midst of an uninhabited grazing wilderness well on towards the midnight hour. There was nothing for it except to pull our bruised but unbroken bones together and walk on the dreary miles to Athenry, dragging our black bag of treasure with us as best we might; but the all-sufficient comfort was that we and the black bag victoriously got there, and that our little casualty owed nothing to the genius of the enemy's military arrangements for the day. To complete the story of Sir Michael Hicks Beach's (the unfortunate gentleman was henceforward known to his irreverent Irish subjects as "Micky the Botch") first field-day as a Coercionist, we were two days afterwards served in Dublin with a notice from the Crown discontinuing the prosecution against us in Loughrea, and the final touch of broad farce was given to the proceedings by the solemn return to us of the moneys grabbed by the vinous police-officer, with a handsome acknowledgment that the illegality lay with the officers of the law and not with their prisoners. It was doubtless discovered, a little late, that to devote the power of England to the exaction of the rackrents of a criminal maniac like Lord Clanricarde was not the happiest way of capturing the hearts of the British electorate.

But the first shot in Loughrea only died away to give place to a prodigious cannonade from all the guns of Dublin Castle. The next day the dead walls were

aflame with a Proclamation from the Lord Lieutenant stigmatising the Plan of Campaign as "an unlawful and criminal conspiracy," menacing with instant prosecution all and sundry who should thenceforth breathe its name and with summary confiscation "all moneys, receipts, books or documents given or received for the purpose of the conspiracy," On the same day, Messrs. Crilly, Dillon, Harris, "Willie" Redmond, Sheehy, M.P.'s, and myself were summoned to a Dublin Police Court to show cause why we should not be returned for trial on a revised charge of conspiracy furbished up by the bother-headed Law Officers. A trial, provided only it were a fair trial by a jury of our countrymen, was, of all things, what we should have prescribed for ourselves; but, with a competent knowledge of how juries might be packed and witnesses and judges suborned, under the Dublin Castle dispensation, it became common prudence in the meantime to complete our collection of rents on the "campaigned" estates, and in doing so to fill the country with a comfortable confidence that there would be no failure on our part to drive coaches-and-four through Viceregal Proclamations and State prosecutions. The brilliant effect of the Government's ban upon the public collection of rents, which furnished them with abundant evidence against the collectors, was to force us to make our remaining collections in private, without any longer taking the police into our confidence. It may be interesting to give one specimen of the respect paid to the Lord Lieutenant's bill of pains and penalties on the estate of the Countess of Kingston, at Mitchelstown, where the collections had not yet actually commenced.

The Archbishop of Cashel had bidden me as usual to spend Christmas under his roof at Thurles. Michael Davitt, long my fellow-lodger on the top-floor of the Imperial Hotel (which has since, perhaps appropriately enough, ended its career by being laid in

ashes in the bombardment during the *Sinn Fein* Rising of 1916) was the only person who joined me at an early dinner on Christmas Eve. A dismal pair we were, alone in the vast diningroom, the visitors all flown for the Christmas festivities, and the head-waiter the only one of the staff left to wait upon our solemn loneliness.

"I declare to God," cried Davitt, as the meal crawled mournfully through, "I declare to God, this is the last Christmas I'll ever spend without some sort of a home of my own. Michael," to the hovering head-waiter, "go home to your children and let us wash up the things."

Davitt was as good as his word. Before Christmas came again he was happily married, and the brow which during our gloomy *rencontres* in the attics would so often drape itself in black clouds was seldom or never again seen without a nimbus of boyish happiness.

The lumbering Christmas Eve train only brought me to Thurles half-frozen with cold while they were preparing for the Midnight Mass at the Convent of the Ursulines. A most heavenly vision that Midnight Mass always was, all the more that I was the only lay person of common clay privileged to intrude upon that scene of dazzling wax-lights, white flowers, and cloistered, kneeling figures, the while the Archbishop's masculine, if musically lawless, chant was deliciously swallowed up by the ethereal voices of the choir-sisters, as they floated off into a *Gloria in Excelsis, Deo*, which it needed no excess of Irish imagination to hear bursting in an ecstasy straight from the heavens over Bethlehem. One other personage of very uncommon clay, indeed, was also made free of the divine enclosure. It was the Archbishop's tiny black dog, "Fiji," which he had brought with him from the South Sea Islands on his return from his Colonial Bishopric, and tended even to the little creature's death-

bed in a ripe old age with the fondness of his steadfast heart. "Fiji" was, however, a South Sea aristocrat too fine to be an incongruity even in such a scene. He followed the Archbishop from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the altar with as much punctuality as the nun who was acting as acolyte, and lay on the marble floor in an attitude as good as kneeling during the most solemn parts of the Mass. Even the lively ringing of the bells during the *Gloria* did not tempt him to any contributions of his own in the language of the South Seas.

Dr. Tanner arrived next day to join me in our swoop on the Mitchelstown estate on Christmas night. The Archbishop had all the relish for adventure which carried him over the wall of the Irish College in Paris in '48 to bless the fight for Liberty at the barricades, joined with an intense realisation of the wrongs of his people, and love for all who would strike a stout blow in their desperate battle. He would insist upon my detailing our plans, his eye kindling and his cheek tingling with a roguish enjoyment: "You must not think I am late in the field with my benedictions," he told me. "Weeks ago I said to myself it is time for me to lend these poor boys a hand and not let them be beaten to the ground, and I went upstairs to write a letter to tell the country that in my opinion the law of 'The Plan' was at all events a juster law than the law of England, when *The Freeman* was put into my hands and I found that Willie ——¹ had taken the bread out of my mouth."

We were all in high spirits at the news of Lord Randolph Churchill's withdrawal from the Government. Even the witches' Sabbath in Belfast, by means of which he did not scruple to raise the Orange devil he in his heart despised with more contempt than we,

¹ Referring to an eminent Irish ecclesiastic, who had publicly championed the Plan.

was half forgiven him at the moment, for his impish genius promised to be as expert in pelting the Coercion Government out of office as in raising the paving-stones of Belfast. Our Christmas dinner-party was as simple and joyous as the circle around His Grace's table was always sure to be. "The victuals," as he loved to call them, were of the best, and so were the wines within a modest compass; but all else was of minor account in the glow of his own bulk and big assemblance at the head of the table, genial, appreciative, overflowing with high spirits and unwounding raillery—a schoolboy and a great man gloriously combined to give his guests the sensation of a summer sun warming us in a little firmament of our own, while the frost and snow were making the world howl and shudder outside. One of the Christmas party was a little Augustinian priest—whom the Archbishop called affectionately "George" or "The Friar" or "The Hermit"—who, I suspect, was indebted to His Grace's privy purse for the means of sustaining the small convent of Austin Hermits of which he was now the only surviving Hermit. I am quite sure it was out of tenderness for his solitary condition he was bidden to the warmth of the Archiepiscopal Christmas board. His Grace bantered "The Friar" with the unfailing good humour which saves the rough-and-tumble pleasantries among Irish priests at their convivial moments from ever degenerating into malice or anger. "The Friar" listened with a twinkle in his rolling eye, cleaned up his trencher of roast turkey or plum pudding with a gentle joy, and, imitating the revenge of Suwaroff, who "made no answer, but he took the city," he after dinner, relieved the cleverest of his tormentors of their sixpences at the game of "Nap." Not, however, the Archbishop, who walked round the table inspecting the players' hands and now and again helped a lame dog over the stile by an expert hint, but, so far as my experience went, never took a hand himself.

Between Charlie Tanner and His Grace—both of them models of physical strength which under the chisel of an Athenian sculptor might have lived as miracles in marble—their common passion for athletics would have been an all-sufficient bond. They talked boxing, and Tanner, true to his French training, defended the head thrust in the stomach as legitimate as well as effective warfare, while Dr. Croke mentioned that he had himself once punished that mode of attack on the part of a Frenchman by a sound kicking of another inferior and still less noble part of the body below the belt. They were both fanatics for handball. Dr. Croke regretted he did not know Tanner's gift while daylight lasted, as he should have challenged Charlie to a match against the garden wall of the Archiepiscopal Palace. But hurling was the Archbishop's grand passion in the matter of Irish sports. It had all the intoxication of battle and had kept Irish soldiery alive during the Penal ages, when the people were stripped of their last battleaxe or gun. Even the faction-fighting of old he spoke of not without softness as a sort of battle exercise when there was no better to be had, and *à propos* mentioned that in the onsets between Tipperary and Cork, long ago, the brawny giants of Tipperary who generally had the upper hand used to say of a man whose skull was cracked with undue facility: "That fellow has a Cork skull," to which the Cork retort used to be: "Yes, a Cork skull has some brains to be knocked out."

Like most men of exuberant physical energy, Dr. Croke had a strange horror of death, or even of the mention of it. A lanthorn-jawed young priest having made some allusion to the saying of St. Liguori: "Remember your last end and you will never sin," the Archbishop put him promptly down with the observation: "My dear man, remember your last end and you will never do anything at all." When he was told of a certain man, oppressed with the immeasurable

sadness of life at its best, who remarked : “ The only person I ever envy at a funeral is the gentleman in the coffin,” his comment was : “ Well, then, honest man,¹ if I was the corpse in question, I should take you at your word and step out to let you in.” On another occasion, at the funeral of a Bishop in Queenstown, having received a message asking if His Grace of Cashel would care to visit the vault of the Bishops of Cloyne before it was closed, he sent the tart reply : “ Tell him His Grace of Cashel is in no hurry to enter a tomb either dead or alive.”

The Archbishop, in his enthusiasm for the mission of the Irish Race, as the regenerators of Religion, was a singular mixture of the mediaeval monk and of the Colonial Democrat, with a certain free-born Protestant strain in his blood. Columbanus he regarded as the greatest Irishman who ever lived. He and his Irish monks would have ruled Europe, and Columbanus would have been a Pope, only for his headstrong obstinacy in clinging to his own queer form of tonsure and insisting upon celebrating Easter on Palm Sunday. Ever after the English influence at Rome was too much for Ireland. He had once met Père Lacordaire and was an ardent believer in the dreams of Montalembert and himself of a Pope as the Supreme Pontiff of Liberty. That was, indeed, in the beginning, the central aim of the Paris Revolution of 'Forty-Eight. La Mennais I don't think he had ever any personal communication with ; but much though he lamented his tragical end, he frankly blamed a priest for setting up as a sort of anti-Pope of Liberty on his own account, and had no more patience with his throwing up the barricades against Rome than he had with Columbanus' odd fashion in tonsures. The Irish race, still so unspoilt in virgin faith and innocence that he would

¹ A playful mode of address with him—a translation of the old Gaelic salutation : “ *A dhuine chóir !* ”

say : " Dig up the first Irish graveyard around you and you will find as good relics of saints as any they can send you from Rome," he regarded as the best modern asset of the Church, if the Italian Cardinals would only see it. Science could never know as much of the highest things as any old Irishwoman could teach it. " Those fellows who go swaggering about telling us how fast they can make us travel, and guessing the age of the earth as a cattle-jobber would tell you the age of a heifer by her mouthful of teeth have no more right to tell me what we're in the world for than the architect who built my cathedral, and did it well, would have to put up his own statue on the High Altar for public worship in the place of God. We need not discard the railroads nor burn the new books about physiology, but the experts, though first-rate servants, must keep a civil tongue in their heads to the Master. There is no missionary race worth its salt now except the Irish. They are the only spiritual force in the English-speaking world, which is half the world. They have the right *blas*¹ to capture the whole earth for a great cause. Yet at every hand's turn this Irish race of ours is smitten like Columbanus or snubbed like Montalembert."

To turn from the Archbishop's bright fireside and bright personality to the cheerlessness of a night-long journey through the frozen air upon a perilous adventure gave one some inkling of what must have been Adam's first feelings on being driven out of Paradise by the sword of the law. But the best promise of our success was the unforeseenableness of Christmas night being chosen for our expedition. I had noticed that Kilmallock was the only station where no policeman watched the arrival of the down mail train. At Kilmallock accordingly we alighted unseen an hour or so

¹ Pronounced *bloss* : an untranslatable Gaelic term, meaning not merely the right accent, but some indefinable charm which makes language irresistible.

after midnight and had first to beat up a sleeping hotel-keeper, who had next to beat up a still sleepier car-driver. But these were times when our names and our business had only to be whispered to inspire almost anybody to go anywhere or do anything. Before an hour we were perched on our outside jaunting car upon a road which was one almost unbroken sheet of ice. The unfortunate steed and the wheels of his vehicle literally skated over the flat miles of the road, and upon the mountain part of the journey we were glad to coax the cold out of our marrow by racing up the hills or shouldering horse and jaunting car in the ascent of some particularly unnegotiable "rise of ground." We arrived at our little hotel in Mitchelstown before daybreak without encountering one homeless human being except our own car-load.

The little council of war we had soon assembled in the cloud of turf smoke raised by "the girleen" in her honest efforts to light a fire in the icy coffee-room was to me chiefly memorable for my first meeting with the local chief of the clans, John Mandeville—a gentleman farmer of the herculean physique of the Galtee mountain country, with a heart as soft as wax and a spirit that would have felt at home in the Pass of Thermopylæ—who was to be my faithful comrade in many a subsequent clash of arms in the field and in the prisons, and whose superb manhood, as not uncommonly happens, was destined to be beaten down into an untimely grave, while my own puny frame is spared to pay him a mournful tribute a quarter of a century afterwards. Our arrangements for the assembling of the tenantry by townlands after nightfall once completed, we slept all the hours of the day away with the deep contentment of men enjoying their first taste of warmth since our farewell glimpse of the Archbishop in the Christmas glow of his dining-room. The arrangements worked with the clockwork pre-

cision of a conspiracy where practically the entire community were the conspirators. When we drove off after dark with Mr. Arthur O'Connor, who had now joined us, we found the tenants almost to a man awaiting us in the different rendezvous. We held our meetings with none to bear evidence of our words except the friendly reporters (who throughout all these campaigns were more priceless to their people's liberties than an army of policemen and jailors were to our enemies), and far into the night by the tallow candles in half-a-dozen mountain cabins we sat at the receipt of the " Campaign Rents " until the collections over more than half the vast estate were safe in our wallets and by some fairy machinery transported beyond reach of the Queen's writ. The grimmest of the Coercionist satraps of that day—Captain Plunkett, a Divisional Commissioner, half judge, half military executioner, whose own life eventually paid the penalty of his lawlessness—had been specially deputed to smother " the conspiracy " on the Mitchelstown estate at its birth, while the funds were still uncollected. When we got back to our Mitchelstown hotel, with our work more than half accomplished in a single night, our first sight of any of Captain Plunkett's police army was when a constable called to the hotel-keeper with the forlorn inquiry who were the strange gentlemen who were rumoured to have arrived during the night? The upshot of the Viceregal Proclamation of " The Plan " and of the State prosecutions for conspiracy was a demonstration that the conspirators could do their work with considerably greater efficiency when it was, by decree of the Coercionists, transferred from the public marketplace and the hearing of the police note-taker to regions of mysterious invisibility, where the Ariels of Irish ingenuity were free to play their cruel tricks upon the besotted Trinculos whom alone Dublin Castle could hire to do its bidding. *Q.E.D.!*

Every new blow from the Castle was now followed

up from our side with the deliberate determination to force oppression to show its most hateful face and to hold up its instruments to contempt, defeat and popular diversion. When application was made to commit us for trial, the proceedings at the Police Court were turned into the laughing-stock of Dublin by our success in forcing the Chief Secretary, the Attorney-General, Sir Redvers Buller and Captain Plunkett by *subpoena* into the witness box, where they made a greatly more humiliating figure than the traversers at the bar. These great officers of State were made to stammer out the admission that *United Ireland's* discovery of the Attorney-General's confidential advice owning the legality of the Plan of Campaign was a perfectly genuine one, and that they had themselves conspired to put more extra-legal pressure than we upon the bankrupt rackrenters they were now pledging the power of England to abet in their barbarities. Our offence really was that we were succeeding where an alien government was bound to fail. One signal instance of our success while the Chief Secretary and his Chief Law Officer were still quaking in the witness box made a profound sensation. I took advantage of the adjournment of the Court from Saturday to Monday to go down to the estate of Viscount Dillon, who had served hundreds of eviction notices and appealed to the Castle for military help to effectuate his programme of extermination. When the Court reassembled, it was to learn that the traverser, who was supposed to be trembling in the grip of English justice, had been down to Mayo and had come back with the signed capitulation of that powerful nobleman to the Plan of Campaign in his pocket.¹

¹ It was in a speech near Ballaghaderin on this occasion that the writer conferred on Mr. Serjeant Peter O'Brien the title of "Pether the Packer," by which to his dying day he was better known than by the Lord Chief Justiceship or the Peerage bestowed on him by a grateful England for making her name detestable. On this

His Lordship, on the sensible advice of his sub-agent (afterwards Sir Henry Doran of the Congested Districts Board) had agreed to drop his processes, to reinstate his evicted tenants, to wipe out all law costs, and in return to receive out of the Plan of Campaign war-chest the entire amount of his rental less the twenty per cent. abatement which he might have saved the Government and himself no end of anguish and humiliation by conceding before the spectre of the Plan of Campaign arose to affright his slumbering conscience. At a stroke, four thousand peasant families received the benefit of Parnell's rejected Bill without an angry blow and without losing a penny in law charges.

When the State Trials were removed into the exalted region of the High Court, the Crown Council could not well have exerted themselves more actively to render English law alike hateful and impotent had they been briefed by our own solicitors. Indeed, the full-dress Bar retained for our defence were more nervous about the foolhardiness of their clients than were their clients about the terrors of the law. One of them, "Dick" Adams, the famous judge and more famous wit, used to relate with a capital show of horror their "consultation" with the traversers in the back drawingroom of our devoted solicitor, Val Dillon. We were all, perhaps, a little intolerant of our eminent counsel's devices for staving off a conviction. Safety, as well as national policy, lay in giving no quarter and expecting none in dealing with the infamous imposture we knew alien "justice" to be. The one thing to be done with the jury packing, by which alone convictions could be contrived, was to denounce and defy it—the more aggressively the better. Adams likened the attitude of our leading counsel, who had been

occasion also appeared the first English Member of Parliament (the late Mr. Conybeare) who threw in his fortunes with the Plan of Campaign. He was the first swallow of a propitious summer.

Attorney-General under the Liberal Government and whom he called "poor Sammy Walker"—a worthy lawyer, but feeble politician—as he listened with a meek horror to his lawless clients—to that of "a little rabbit putting up his two paws to beseech the boys not to heave a brick at him." Adams shrank from telling of himself, unless in safe company, a story which Mr. Healy, who was one of our junior counsel, told for him. As the traversers left the consultation room, Adams planted his back against the door, and as soon as he was quite sure his clients were not within earshot, cried out to his learned brethren: "Well, I declare to God, I would as soon be defending a menagerie!"

The next day, when the jury came to be sworn, Mr. Walker himself could find no terms too scathing to stigmatise the villainy that was on foot. The venue had been changed to the County of Dublin; a venue studded with the villa residences of fanatical loyalists, but even within this exotic area the jury-panel contained an unconscionable number of Gaelic Catholic Byrnes and Murphys proportioned to a population of whom two-thirds were Catholic, and the law nominally required that the list for each letter should be exhausted before it could be recommenced. The difficulty was met by a trick as impudent and unashamed as that which compelled the House of Lords to quash the conviction of O'Connell. Under the letter B, for example, the panel was selected from the earlier names, like Backhouse, where the Cromwellian patronymics predominated, and the multitudinous Byrnes at the end of the letter were never reached at all. And, so from letter to letter until a thousand Catholic heads were struck off, and out of a population two-thirds Catholic only ninety-five were suffered to find their way upon the jury panel; and of the ninety-five on the panel all but three were banished from the jury-box by the cry of "Stand aside!" from the official

jury-packers. 'Two even of the three only passed through the meshes by a misadventure over which "Pether the Packer" must have that evening torn his hair or the hair of his subordinates. But who could have suspected that one of the outlawed race and creed lurked under the sumptuous family name of Augustus Abraham? And the second, a Catholic Nationalist named Talbot, was effusively ushered into the jury-box by the jury-packers in the belief that he was a Dromio of the same name who stood high in the ranks of the Masonic elect.

The fraud, barefaced though it was, was allowed by the presiding judge to prevail, but the exposure gave rise to a hurricane of indignation, in England as well as in Ireland, which turned upon the heads of the jury-packers the full tide of odium intended for the traversers, and which even a successful prosecution under such conditions could now only intensify. On the initiative of the Archbishop of Dublin a great National Defence Fund was enthusiastically subscribed. Within a week, ten of the Bishops were among the subscribers. The Archbishop of Cashel insisted upon the distinction between the law of God and the law of England so outspokenly that the Chief Secretary announced in the House of Commons that his letter "was occupying the serious attention of the Government" with a view to prosecution. A still more startling, because more novel, portent was a meeting of practically all the men of leading in the Liberal Party to cry out against the Dublin trials. When Parnell made his first appearance in the House of Commons after his illness, to arraign jury-packing in Ireland, he carried a potent minority of 248 into the Lobby with him. Sir William Harcourt himself, safest of safe Party politicians, burst out into a manful eulogium of the Plan of Campaign, as the natural weapon of a nation unconquerably averse to a system of English government of Ireland, which he declared

amidst the ringing cheers of the Liberal host to be at the moment "the worst government in the world." A somewhat sharp commentary upon Mr. Morley's prognostication that "in England the effect of the Plan would be wholly bad." The Liberal Party had really found its soul, and Ireland had acquired an army of defenders.

The traversers knew the packed court in Dublin was on its own trial before a more august tribunal, and of set purpose poured contumely and scorn on their judges. While the trial was in mid-career, "Pether" made a last effort to wield his battered sceptre by applying that the traversers should be bound over to make no political speeches during the week-end adjournment. The application was received with Homeric laughter from the traversers' bench, and the next day the conspirators were traversing the country triumphantly prosecuting the conspiracy for the punishment of which the jury-packers in Green street had furbished up the choicest of their ancient racks and thumbscrews. The Governmental botches blundered into "proclaiming" Mr. Dillon's meeting on the Coolgreany estate, in Wexford, with the result that meetings sprang up all over the horizon with redoubled fervour wherever Mr. Dillon, John Redmond and Sir Thomas Esmonde showed their faces. On the Mitchelstown estate, the writer took a different way of checkmating the proclamation-writers by making no public announcement at all of the meeting and giving Captain Plunkett a staggering proof of the impolicy of driving the people to secret courses, by organising silently during the night a concourse of many thousands, before whom his half-a-dozen surprised policemen stood in awe-struck helplessness. How complete was the discomfiture of the jury-packers even in the Court which was their own holy of holies will be best understood from an incident, possible only in Ireland, which may now doubtless be

related without hurt to anybody concerned. In the writer's week-end speech the surrender of another great landowner in the West (Lord Dunsandle) to the Plan of Campaign was announced in the following terms :

" Why did they suppress the meeting in Loughrea to-day ? . . . It is easy to understand why the Government and why Clanricarde should be anxious to suppress the tidings that I bring here to-day, for these tidings are that another lord has come down from his throne and taken off his hat, or rather his coronet, to the Plan of Campaign. (Cheers.) Another lord, a next-door neighbour to Clanricarde, has surrendered what we will yet drag from Clanricarde if it costs us our last pound and the last breath in our bodies. When this agitation commenced, Lord Dunsandle like Lord Clanricarde, would not give a penny of abatement, but I struck a bargain yesterday with Lord Dunsandle's representative, by which he agreed to an all-round abatement of twenty per cent., and on the judicial rents, remember, which were already at the valuation, and he agreed also to the reinstatement of all evicted tenants and to the payment of all law costs. (Cheers.) Why, actually to-morrow when I will be arraigned in Green Street as a conspirator, I will be handing over to Lord Dunsandle a handsome cheque that will bring peace and restore harmony to a vast region of the country on just and moderate terms' (Cheers.) This is an awkward fact for Clanricarde and for the Government, and I am not surprised that they should be anxious to hush it up."

And so it happened. As the Court was breaking up the next day, the Clerk of the Peace (now Sir George Fottrell), who, a few days previously, had solemnly put to me the dread question : " William O'Brien, are you guilty or not guilty ? " came across from his seat under the Judge to the traversers' bench and whispered in my ear : " About that little cheque, William ?

Don't go away before you step into my office and fix things up." In his private capacity as a Law Agent of much eminence, he had acted as Lord Dunsandle's intermediary, and in the office of the Clerk of the Peace, accordingly, the Law Agent received a cheque from the Plan of Campaign war-chest for the agreed total of Lord Dunsandle's rents and returned a thankful receipt for the amount to the criminal conspirator then on trial in the High Court of which he was the chief officer !

The end could be no longer doubtful. The packed jury, for whose construction the guilt of all this foul play had been incurred, were equally divided and were discharged without a verdict. The unfortunate Chief Secretary was the principal victim of his own petard. His last days in Ireland were shaded by a tragedy which ought to have warned the most reckless of his successors to beware of their Dublin Castle hirelings. A threat by the Chief Secretary in the House of Commons, in a moment of irritation at the collapse of the State Trials, that Irish crowds must henceforth "expect something sharper than batons," was the next night interpreted by the sinister Captain Plunkett into an order for a bayonet charge into an unarmed crowd in Youghal, in the course of which a poor fisherman named Hanlon was run through the body by "something sharper than batons." A week later this English gentleman of sensitive honour, for whom in the private forum foul play and murder would have been unthinkable abominations, took advantage of a temporary delicacy of the eyes to resign his office, and rejoined the long line of fallen English rulers of Ireland whose departures were the only gleam of comfort in their administrations, either for themselves, or for the country upon which their empiricism was practised.

CHAPTER XIII

A GOVERNMENT OF REVENGE

(1887)

There were two sharply-defined phases in the Unionist Government's wars upon the Plan of Campaign : the first, that of Sir M. Hicks Beach, in which the attempt was to combat the Plan of Campaign by imitating it too feebly and too late ; the second, that of Mr. Balfour, sullenly to acknowledge the justice of the Plan by passing it substantially into law, but to exact vengeance for its success by excluding from relief under the law the eight or ten bodies of peasants by whose sacrifices it had been won. Or, more cruelly still, these humble people's homes were to be burnt down with petroleum or pounded to pieces by the battering ram, and their legal property in their holdings confiscated to the last penny, in order that their sufferings might be made the means of discrediting, for political ends, the handful of politicians on whose advice they had acted, and on whose advice the Government themselves were compelled to act as well. This second aspect of the struggle must be carefully borne in mind by anyone who would understand the fatuity as well as the brutality of England's government of Ireland during the five succeeding years.

Had Mr. Balfour known Ireland with the same breadth of view and even shy tenderness he developed after years of bitter, mutual misconstruction, he would have seen in the situation when Sir M. Hicks Beach threw up the Chief Secretaryship an opportunity

beyond price, not only for the immediate assuagement of the agrarian fever, but for that patriotic concert between Irish classes, founded upon the elimination of Irish landlordism, which, seventeen years later, when he was himself leader of the House of Commons, brought an enduring alliance between the two countries nearer than ever it had been before, or is likely to be soon again. Dispute as the pedants of small things might about the morals of the Plan of Campaign, events had proved its necessity and its efficacy as a means of staving off the catastrophe resulting from the rejection of Parnell's Bill in the previous Session. The Government's own magnificently lawless dispenser with the laws, Sir Redvers Buller, had owned to the Cowper Commission that "the League was the salvation of the people." The Plan remained the only means of doing for the other thirty counties what his benevolent despotism was to some extent accomplishing in Kerry and Clare. Even Buller failed to arrest the arm of the landowner of the Glenbeigh estate, among the Kerry mountains, who brandished his petroleum can and brought his battering ram into action for a series of evictions which sent a pang to every tender heart in Britain, as well as in Ireland. The Cowper Commission, at the very moment of the Hicks Beach collapse, published a report vindicating in every particular the foresight of Parnell and lamenting the infatuation which had rejected his counsels. They advised the relief he had demanded for a hundred and fifty thousand leaseholders, and they recommended that the Judicial Rents should be abated to almost precisely the figure standardised by the Plan of Campaign combinations—in some instances to an extent exceeding the abatements for seeking which Campaign tenants were afterwards evicted, and, as the landlords and the Government calculated, irreparably ruined.

Up to this moment, also, be it remembered, no

tenant on any of the "campaigned" estates had been evicted, and there were as yet no bitter memories to rankle in the popular heart. Two of the greatest landowners in the West had already manifested good sense enough to accept their moderately abated rents from the Plan of Campaign exchequer, and scores of them in every county were hastening to forestall any recourse to the Plan by conceding the standard rates of abatement. The only considerable landowner claiming the armed support of England for his atrocities was the maniacal Clanricarde, and even his own agent, Mr. Frank Joyce, threw up the agency rather than be his accomplice in "the devil's work," for which he looked to England to be the sponsor. A wise English ruler would have marked above all that this benign revolution was doing its work in a crimeless country unstained by a single deed of blood such as those which had been the despair of Forster and of Spencer. The area of acute disturbance, too, was circumscribed by the boundaries of less than a dozen extensive estates, and it was notorious that, had we relaxed our determination to adhere to our understanding with Parnell, the overthrow of the Hicks Beach administration after its ignoble discomfiture in Green Street would have been the signal for an universal enforcement of the Plan of Campaign before the next gale day, with results which must have pre-dated the Unionist Ministry's abolition of Irish landlordism by sixteen years.

Was Mr. Balfour aware that our area of combat was thus limited, and had the knowledge perchance anything to do with his determination to "make examples" of these isolated bodies of tenants, even while compelled to extend to the rest of the country the relief gained by their struggle? Was it even an aggravation of the original sin of the Plan that its successes had been achieved without a vestige of violence such as any jury of humane men would have found to be a crime?

God knoweth. What is not doubtful is that, if he frankly made the Land Bill of that Session one of universal application, the Plan of Campaign must have instantly ceased to operate and the whole forces of the national movement have been concentrated in a loyal and patient support of Gladstone's and Parnell's appeal to the British electorate. He chose instead, to penalise the Campaign estates in a black list of exceptions, and forsaking once for all Sir M. Hicks Beach's attempt to bring the rackrenters to reason by a pressure which was none the less just for not being legal, the new Chief Secretary egged on the landlords to proceed ruthlessly with the evictions of their rebellious tenants, and undertook to support them with all the terrors of a new Coercion Act which could not have been more atrociously framed if its object were to goad the country into violence and bloodshed. He came, not as a peacemaker, but as a conqueror and an avenger, who made it his main principle of government to incite, reward and defend to the last extremity the zeal of every official of Dublin Castle until his Removable Magistrates, jury-packers, policemen, jailers, pimps and parasites got it firmly into their heads that they were justified and acquitted beforehand in the estimation of their patron, no matter by what excess of inhumanity or foul play they might signalise themselves.

That a man of exquisite courtesy and moral elevation—one, too, who lived to love Ireland and to have a soft corner in his heart even for the Nationalist foes he once contemned—should have, however subconsciously, been the victim of such a code of honour is one of the most curious enigmas suggested by England's failures in Ireland. Invincible ignorance is, perhaps, the nearest approach to an explanation. He had probably never laid his eyes on Ireland until he landed as her ruler. As he piqued himself on "never reading the papers" it is possible that, when he

handed over the key of his conscience to his subalterns in Dublin Castle, he had never heard of the horrors which followed a similar error on the part of Lord Spencer—not even, perhaps, of the cold-blooded murder in Youghal by which Captain Plunkett punctuated Sir M. Hicks Beach's allusion to "something sharper than batons" a few nights before his resignation. As the most academic of the Fourth Party, the lanky young aristocrat had languished for years within a yard of us on that Front Bench below the gangway where few dare to sit whose tailors, hatters and bootmakers do not embolden them to affront the gaze of the Ministerialists opposite and of the Ladies' Gallery overhead. Lord Randolph looked back often enough to exchange a hint or a joke with somebody on our benches, but I can only remember Mr. Balfour once leaning over, in the midst of a Tory obstruction debate, to inquire with his Olympian grace: "Don't you think, you, gentlemen, might manage to keep this thing going until our people get back at 9.30?" (the post-dinner hour). In mistaking him for a trifler we were as much astray as he was in his judgments concerning us, and it may well be that, as the ferocious futility of his Irish Secretaryship did much to recommend the Irish cause in Britain, we also by putting him on his mettle did him the best service of his life by stimulating the apparently irredeemable Alcibiades of the dandy essences and the soft robes to show himself an Alcibiades capable of the frugal Spartan fare and heroic nerve of the Lacedæmonian wars. When pressed in the wrestling he, no doubt, like his Grecian prototype, bit the hands of his antagonist, with whom we, too, were apt to cry: "You bite, Alcibiades, like a woman." But the retort: "No, like a lion," would not have been without its point: for the silken aristocrat, truly, proved to have nerves of steel.

That it was the personal irreverence—the rough

democratic directness of our attacks—which was really to be thanked for rousing him into the only fit of first-class activity in his career, may be guessed even from such minor details as that in once bragging to the House that he was known in Ireland by the dread appellation of “Cromwell,” he forgot to add the complete nickname, which was, “a Cromwell in plaster of Paris.” Probably the most personally hurtful episode of his Irish career was his pursuit all over the country with a writ for libel by an honest midwife named Peggy Dillon, whom he had incautiously accused of refusing to attend an emergency man’s lady.

A third element, and the strongest in determining Mr. Balfour to translate Lord Salisbury’s “twenty years of firm and resolute government” into a reality, without the smallest feeling for the constitutional rights or liberties of the Irish Hottentots, was his conviction that the whole trouble lay with half-a-dozen men; the two most important of them men in broken health, who had only to be driven off the field, by fair means, or by means of at least questionable fairness, to make the English conquest of Ireland complete and enduring. It is the hallucination which has haunted every successive English ruler for ages, and, in spite of a hundred disenchantments, it haunts them still. Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt¹ tells us that early in his Chief Secretaryship Mr. Balfour confided to him his belief that “the Home Rule agitation depended on half-a-dozen men” whom he named, and that “if these were got out of the way under the new Crimes Act, the whole thing would collapse.” A more sinister light was shed on his plans by the revelation: “We are not going to have any nonsense such as there was in Forster’s time.” (when his captives were treated as political prisoners). “They will

¹ *The Land War in Ireland*, Appendix D.

be given six months' hard labour and it takes a strong man to live through it " : and he instanced Mr. Dillon " who has some good points if he was not such a liar," as one who " would certainly die " under the treatment. Without holding Mr. Balfour literally to any wilful resolve in connection with the revolting calculations passing through his mind, there can now be no rational doubt that Mr. Blunt's disclosure was in substance a conscientiously true one, for it was the plan which during the first two years of his Chief Secretaryship Mr. Balfour systematically endeavoured to give effect to. That is to say, the plan of accompanying political imprisonment with personal degradations that must either break the spirit of sensitive men or jeopardise the lives of men already in a fragile state of health. Although the time has long passed when Irishmen desire to indulge any memory of Mr. Balfour other than one of grief for the tragedy of misunderstandings which is the curse of all human life, it must here be firmly set down that the programme would have been surely proceeded with to a finish if the men he had in his mind's eye had flinched from the penalty, or, perhaps, still more remorselessly if the policy of petty prison tormentation of antagonists, far from cowing Ireland, had not aroused the disgust and alarm of almost every friend of freedom in England.

Mr. Balfour began his rule in Ireland with a new Coercion Act which Gladstone declared " made his blood run cold." It enabled the Lord Lieutenant at a stroke of the pen to suppress any organisation of the people, any public meeting, any newspaper, without even assigning a cause. It abolished the right of trial by jury. It placed men's lives at the mercy of three Judges nominated by the Castle. It exposed all Irishmen to sentences of six months imprisonment at hard labour at the hands of two paid magistrates removable and promotable at the caprice of Dublin

Castle. And these and a score of other instruments of oppression were not to be the desperate expedients of a desperate emergency, but were to be the settled law of Ireland for all time, the sentence of her everlasting slavery. The "remedial measure" with which it is the Pharisaic custom of England to engarland her savageries in Ireland was in one respect more atrocious than the Coercion Act which made deliberate provision for keeping Coercion in perpetual motion. The first draft of Mr. Balfour's Land Bill, ignoring the recommendation of the Cowper Commission that the Judicial Rents should be cut down all round by substantially the percentages claimed on the Campaign estates, made the astounding proposal that, in order to make any relief available, the tenants must first file petitions in Bankruptcy. As if universal bankruptcy were not a sufficient penalty for tenants declared by the Unionists' own Commission to be just in their claims, the tenants' "equity of redemption"—the inestimable *moratorium* of six months after the decree of eviction during which the tenants might still preserve their tenant-right from extinction—was abolished by a proviso enacting that the receipt of a registered letter containing the decree was to be in itself sufficient to complete the eviction and to confiscate the tenants' property without a penny of compensation. By this Machiavellian stratagem not only were millions' worth of the peasants' all in life to be transferred into the pockets of the rackrenters, but the crime was to be automatically effectuated without any more of the harrowing eviction scenes which gave public opinion some chance of manifesting itself, and which, it may be added, were apt to have a disquieting effect upon the votes of British electors.

Nor was any room left for doubt that these unheard-of measures of tyranny, and scarcely less cruel "remedial measures" were intended for merciless use. To prevent their being even adequately protested against

in the House of Commons, a new set of gagging Rules were thrust through Parliament of such a character that the entire Opposition, 254 in all, led by their venerable leader, had no other resource than to quit the House of Commons rather than see free speech strangled under their eyes. In Ireland the new Chief Secretary was playing "the strong man" with all the arrogance of a boundless ignorance and a lazy credulity for the story of every subordinate who did not hesitate to be brutal. Sir Redvers Buller was banished from Ireland, and his honest backwoods measures of pressure on the rack-renters were once for all discarded. The grisly Captain Plunkett was encouraged in his view of what was meant by "something sharper than batons" by the prompt discharge from prison and promotion of his two police subalterns against whom a verdict of wilful murder had been returned for their *trop de zèle* at Youghal. The one blunder left uncommitted by Sir M. Hicks Beach was that he shrank from the prosecution of Archbishop Croke when it was "engaging his careful consideration," but his gay successor rushed into a still wilder adventure against the Church in the most sacred of her sanctuaries. There is no more consecrated relation between the Irish priest and his people than the inviolability of any confidences between them. Following the new cue of throwing into the Bankruptcy Court the most substantial of the local leaders of the Plan, the apostles of law and order hit upon the genial device of summoning their priests to reveal as witnesses whatever may have been confided to them as to the extent and whereabouts of the Plan of Campaign funds. Two of the best beloved priests in the country—Father Keller, the parish priest of Youghal, and Father Matt Ryan, a young Curate who was the lion of the fold at Herbertstown—were summoned to the question before Judge Boyd in the Bankruptcy Court. Not only did the faithful priests,

as anybody less callow than an English Chief Secretary must have known, refuse to divulge confidences as sacred to them as if made under the seal of the confessional, but the two most powerful prelates in the country identified themselves in the most unmistakable manner with their refusal. Father Keller, who was no sooner attacked than he received the robes and dignity of Canon from his own Bishop of Cloyne, Dr. MacCarthy, was accompanied to Kilmainham Jail in his own carriage by the Archbishop of Dublin, and a week or two afterwards young Father Matt was accompanied by the Archbishop of Cashel to the same house of Caiphas, surrounded by cheering multitudes, for whom imprisonment in such company became thenceforth one of the most inspiring objects of ambition.

Mr. Balfour's first spring was at the combination on the Marquis of Lansdowne's estate at Luggacurran. The ground was well chosen. The Marquis was a landowner of not illiberal traditions, and was possessed of wealth equal to carrying on a prolonged campaign. The two tenants first aimed at were graziers paying rents of £750 and £1,000 respectively, and consequently little likely to appeal to public sympathy either in Ireland or in England. How move the pity of the country for the fate of the first picked out for eviction, Mr. Denis Kilbride, whose home and life were those of a country gentleman, and who, the charge went, was dishonestly trading on the poverty of his mud-cabin neighbours? The plea was a plausible but an utterly false one. On the merits of the individual case, if Mr. Kilbride's rent was the lordly one of £750, the official valuation which was generally accepted as the equivalent for a reasonable rent was only £450—not greatly more than half the rackrent for which, in a year of desperate depression, he was expelled from his home and despoiled of his means of livelihood. His real offence, of course, was that he

threw in his fortunes with those of his poorest tenants and thus deprived the rackrenters of their traditional resource of using their few wealthy rent-payers to make an easy prey of their more necessitous neighbours. This unbreakable solidarity between the most favoured and the most defenceless, was, indeed, the vitalising principle of the Plan of Campaign, and with its amazing later development of an entire estate in Tipperary submitting to wholesale eviction out of sympathy with their brother-tenants of an estate in the County of Cork whom their landlord had exterminated, constituted the first daring experiment in the invention of that collective sympathetic strike which has since made the newer Trade Unionism irresistible in Britain.

But this class solidarity of the poor and the comparatively affluent seemed at that time a very shocking departure from well-bred righteousness, as well as a capital opening for either breaking or discrediting the Plan of Campaign. Before the eviction army was set in motion negotiations for a friendly settlement, with our hearty concurrence, and, as I have reason to know, with the active sympathy of Earl Spencer, had all but reached the point of an agreement based upon an all-round abatement substantially the same as was compulsorily decreed all over the district under the Unionists' own Act of the next Session. It is no less certain that Lord Lansdowne's agent, Mr. J. Townsend Trench—a man whose ancient family associations with the worst villainies of the Rent Office were now mellowed by the experiences of later years of growing popular power—went to London with the determination to split, in the familiar phrase, the difference still existing. We shall probably never know what happened there, or how much importance is to be given to Mr. Townsend Trench's numerous hints that his own counsels of peace had been overborne by the Chief Secretary's assurances of the most uncompro-

missing assistance in the enforcement of the law, and by his intimation that any pact with the Plan of Campaign, at the outset of his new policy in Ireland, would be nothing short of a betrayal. The Land Agent returned, at all events, to break off the negotiations and to let slip the dogs of war for an eviction campaign, beginning with Mr. Kilbride as the tallest of the poppies. The expectation, perhaps, was that at sight of the evicting army he would think better of sacrificing his mansion and his broad acres, and that the enemies of the Plan would open hostilities with a smashing initial success. The calculation proved as fatuous as all the rest. I never beheld a spectacle of finer, although heart-breaking, self-sacrifice by the strong for the sake of the weak than that which met my eyes when the tenant and the ladies of his family stood immovably by while the emergency men and their police coadjutors with ladders, hatchets and crowbars were battering down their home, and gave up their last legal title to a property which was valued at £10,000 by the Estates Commissioners, when, after many a year of deadly struggle, the wrong was at long last repaired and the home fires once more relighted.

The blow was one to be sternly answered. The evicting landlord was the Governor General of the free Dominion of Canada, one-third of whose population were of Irish blood. In the mingled pride and anguish of the eviction day, it was resolved that the evicted tenant and myself should carry the war into Canada, and at Lord Lansdowne's palace gates challenge him to trial before the free-born democracy under his rule for the wrong done in the distant Irish valley. This novel proof of the length of the arm of Ireland produced a startling effect in the English-speaking world on both sides of the ocean. Speechless was the indignation at the proposal to summon Canada to bring her own Governor-General to account at the

cry of his pillaged and homeless Irish serfs ; but those who were most scandalised at the thought of involving Canadian public opinion in the paltry quarrel of Ireland were mostly those who in after years hailed with transports of enthusiasm the not more altruistic intervention of the Armies of the young Dominion for the liberation of the interesting Tchecho-Slovaque and Yugo-Slav rebels of Austria, and even of that more abstruse and coffee-coloured brother-man, the King of the Hedjaz. As in the case of so many other aids to the power of democracy in the world, Ireland was the first to set the example of calling in the virgin forces of Transatlantic public opinion for the defence of the oppressed in every clime. A much astuter way was taken by our professional defamers to whip up lions in our path. Our visit was cabled across as that of " Fenian assassins " for the purpose of instigating the murder of Lord Lansdowne, and before we were yet on the sea announcements that Lord Lansdowne was afraid to leave his palace and was guarded night and day by police and soldiers, lashed the Orange population of Ontario into a perfect blood-frenzy, and the whole Dominion began to ring with the demand that we should be summarily deported, if we landed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST THUNDERCLAPS

To those for whom the invasion of Canada was the adventure of a mad Knight of La Mancha, one or two answers have to be given. It was a reprisal for Mr. Balfour's Quixotic invasion of Ireland, and results, as it happens, prove that his was the more madcap adventure of the two. The Luggacurran evictions were his first battleground. Success for his battering rams and coercion warrants there would mean convincing Britain that the Irish tenants' combination was an organised swindle, and that the back of Ireland's resistance was broken. Which of the two was to go down—the master of many legions, or we?

In one strange respect his plan and ours coincided. For him it seemed obviously good policy, with, perhaps, a spice of cynical good fun as well, to single out the leaders for his first blows, and beat them mercilessly down by frightfulness, ridicule or what not. With ourselves, the first condition on which we could hope to keep cautious peasants up to the pitch of self-sacrifice required to quit their homes and cast away their last shred of legal property as against the embattled power of Landlordism and of England, was by making them feel that their leaders would be the first to lead the way of suffering and self-sacrifice, and the last to flinch before the force of their tyrants. For myself, as it happened, the last condition was so easy of fulfilment that I had constantly to question myself closely whether my indifference to personal consequences was not the sheer recklessness of one for whom the world had become an empty place rather than the fortitude of a responsible leader of men.

For many years all home ties had been tragically cut off, and no new ones formed, or even dreamt of. My mood was due not to any morose quarrel with the world, which, indeed, had shown a hundred kindly faces to me in a self-willed solitude. It was a settled view of human life as a place of immeasurable loneliness and all but predestined oppression for the poor and weak, and for the under-dog—the legacy, and also the vindication of a religion which adjourned all higher hope and happiness to other spheres. To find that this disregard of personal comfort or craving of any sort might actually grow into a patriotic virtue and become an instrument of not inconsiderable achievements for ennobling the lives and stirring the blood of millions of men was the most delightful of surprises and made me the least promising of subjects for Mr. Balfour's policy of striking at the tall poppies. Hence a negation of danger, rather than a temperate contemplation of it, which will account for many a passage of seeming foolhardiness.

And then the contest was not so unequal as it appeared. Let pedants bandy their *distinguos* as they liked, Sir Redvers Buller and the Royal Commission had attested the essential justice of the tenants' combination, and the Government were about to enact their demands by law. The splenetic outburst of Coercion was but a paltry vengeance upon those who had forced them to be just. Here was an issue on which the judgment of the world might safely be challenged, with crushing effect both as against Landlordism and against the enemies of Home Rule. And, happily, Mr. Balfour had dared the issue and poised his lance under the flag of mere brute force in its most offensive colours. We had already ranked steadfastly on our side an English leader and an English party who represented all the rich promise of progress and of the future. Mr. Morley's prognostication that the Liberal Party would shy at the Plan of

Campaign was rendered a little silly by the discovery that the Unionist Government themselves were coerced to steal its thunders. Nearly all the potent Liberal members of Parliament and newspaper men were flocking over to Ireland with ardent proffers of assistance. If the Orangemen of Ontario should prove as bloodthirsty as they promised to be, for madly irrelevant sectarian motives of their own, so much the better for the purpose of making Lord Lansdowne's evicting crowbar, and Mr. Balfour's ferocious Coercion code, odious in the eyes of the liberating democracy of free America.

Finally, there comes the *ex post facto* consideration that as a matter of fact, the Canadian expedition succeeded. When the accounts were closed, the homes of Luggacurran were re-tenanted, and Mr. Balfour was brought to reconsider the wisdom of his Irish "flutter," as Earl Spencer by sore experience, and the Earl of Carnarvon by humane intuition, had been before him, and as the Earl of Dudley and George Wyndham were brought after him in the fulness of days.

And so we sailed away from Cork Harbour on May 1st in a mingled whirlwind of blessings and curses. As we passed Thurles by the American Mail to Queenstown, I received a parting message from Archbishop Croke, which had for me the sacredness of the *Domhnach Airgid* (the Silver Shrine) with which the Tirconaill clans used to go out to battle :

Saturday Night,
April 30.

Private.

THE PALACE,

THURLES.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I cannot tell you how disappointed I feel at not seeing you before you leave for Canada.

But, I suppose it must be so. I can imagine easily

how many things you will have to attend to, and set in order, before starting on your trip. Being under the impression that the American Mail was to arrive here at 10 o'clock, I had made up my mind to go to the Station House at that hour and give you a true friend's greeting on your way, and a Bishop's blessing on your undertaking. But, I have just learned that the train gets here about 9.10, and as I always say the first Mass at Cathedral on Sunday, which Mass is at 8 o'clock, it will now be impossible for me to see you, and shake your hand and wish you God speed.

But, I'll pray for you—that the God of our fathers may watch over you on the deep, crown your patriotic mission with success, and bring you back to us, soon, in health and triumph.

Fr. Arthur Ryan will have a word with you and hand you this line from

My dear William,

Your very faithful friend,

✠ T. W. CROKE.

Wm. O'Brien Esq.

A frantic crowd was in possession of the landing-stage from which the tender left with the mails for the Cunard liner *Umbria*. Hence, the first rumble of the wrath of the Commander (Mr. McMickan) which was destined to make our voyage the overture, as it were, to the demon music of our Canadian *Tannhäuser*. It was the time when a fast record was to an Atlantic liner what office is to a hungry statesman—power, glory, ecstasy, and money—and the *Umbria* was the favourite “Atlantic greyhound” of the moment. Due allowance must, therefore, be made for the profane fury of the sea-dog on the bridge, as he saw, at the outset of his trip, a golden hour or more was lost ere the tender dared start, while the Lord Mayor and Corporation, and the brass bands, were pouring forth their eloquence, and this deponent striving to

edge in a word of reply to a national farewell, which had much of the blare of a battle, and something of the wailfulness of a wake. When Mr. Kilbride and I stepped on board the liner, we were already the two most unpopular men on board, both with the fuming captain and with the population of the saloon smoking-room whose passion in life was betting on the day's record, in the intervals of the game of poker—to say nothing of our reputation as sons of Lucifer in the eyes of the lady-politicians of the music room. Their temper was not improved by the demonstrations that saluted us as we coasted all along the magnificent headlands of West Cork. It was a wondrous summer day, and from one bay or creek after another, the people sailed or rowed out to wave their flags, and shout their blessings, while from mountain to mountain bonfires shot up from the glowing purple distances in a series of better than royal illuminations.

As the days went on, however, Captain McMickan's growl was softened, and the spirits of the layers of odds in the smoke room rose, as it was found we were still making the fastest run on record. Even in the tropic atmosphere of the saloon we began to discover we were not without friends—Bishop, afterwards Archbishop, Ireland, the ascetic and none the less genial leader of religious thought in America; an honest Briton or two who plucked up courage to shuffle up to us in quiet corners to avow their secret sympathy with Gladstone; a Japanese Minister of War, Viscount Tani, and the members of his mission to Europe (of whom more will be heard) whose brave broadmindedness and delightful gift of sympathy gave me my first inkling of the greatness of Japan; and in the steerage, four or five hundred Irish emigrants, the mere look of whose stalwart forms and kindling eyes inspired the haughty Tory politicians of the state rooms with an adequate fear of the Lord.

By Saturday morning, the *Umbria* had passed Fire Island, and was within an hour's steam of New York. One more unclouded hour, and the golden laurel of the fastest Atlantic run on record would press the brow of Captain McMickan. It was not to be. Within a cannon's shot of victory, a fog as opaque as a world-wide blanket, as cadaverous and impenetrable to argument as death, settled down upon the far-spread harbour and brought the *Umbria* instantly to a dead stop, and throughout all Saturday, all Sunday, and all Monday, left McMickan and friends stewing and moaning and horn-blowing in their clammy prison. Late on Monday night as I was stretched snugly in my state room, re-reading *Felix Holt, Radical*, and trusting to his admirable prosings to set me to sleep in spite of the hundred foghorns, mournful as banshees with sore throats, that were wailing outside, the ship's printer put in his frightened face under the electric lamp with a cry : "Come up, Sir, come up : There's a frightful row upstairs about you." "About me ?" "Yes, they've come out from New York to take you off and there'll be the devil to pay !"

Sure enough, as I clamber to the hurricane-deck, shrouded in my faithful Ulster frieze, I find myself in the midst of a wild jumble of cheers and hootings and tossing figures, something between the rush of a boarding party in a sea-fight and the ferocity of a Paris barricade in full insurrection. Impossible to distinguish friend from foe in the mob as they flit and shout and gesticulate. Looking over the rail near the bridge through the solid white fog, I catch a vague vision of a small steamer struggling to come alongside, but tossed hither and thither by the great uneasy sea which seems now, like the ship's company, to have shaken itself from its deep lethargy, and to be heaving with excitement. "What do you want ?" I can now hear Captain McMickan sing out from the

bridge above my head. "We want O'Brien!" the husky shout comes back from the plunging tugboat. "You shan't get him!" yell a couple of dozen furious voices within a few yards of me, and "Three cheers for Lord Lansdowne!" give me the first raucous hint how the land lies. Fast upon their yells thunders out again Captain McMickan's voice: "No man shall leave this ship until the Medical Officer of Health comes on Board!" It is not so much what is said; it is the boisterous, furious, sea-dog determination to show his teeth—the never—never—shall be—slaves of the message to the Yankee tug-boat—that throws the Lansdowne group into transports. They fairly bellow with exultation. Their bellows completely drown the answer from the tug-boat. "Three cheers for Captain McMickan!" cries somebody, and they are given in volleys and thunders of delight, as though the Captain of the *Umbria* had just planted a red hot shot in the enemy's bows for the honour of the Union Jack.

The field is fought and won. So the ingenuous Britons, young and hoary, somewhat hastily conclude, and the pent-up spleen of their days of bilious musings in the fog finds escape at last in platoons of cheers for Lord Salisbury in celebration of the victory; "to hell with" my inevitable self, and, I grieve to add the same lake of fire and brimstone for "Gladstone, the traitor"; the victorious finale being an arrangement of "God Save the Queen!" which might have been a street riot or a volcanic eruption set to music. I now begin to make out dimly how matters stand among the rushing, shouting, scuffling little mob, and find there is an anti-cyclone developing even among the saloon passengers. Fast upon the cheers for Salisbury comes a stentorian demand for cheers for Parnell; the strains of "God Save Ireland," tear in violently among the diabolical harmonies of the loyal anthem; and down among the steerage

passengers, who are now beginning hoarsely to stir, we can hear them echo and re-echo like distant thunder from the darkness.

While the taunting yells of the Lansdownites are at their most vicious, a clear, fearless voice which I can identify at once as that of Bishop Ireland, shouts to the exulting victors: "This is not fair; you have no right to make a political demonstration here in a mixed assembly. You know well I should only have to call up four hundred Irishmen from the steerage to clear this deck." The distance, the darkness, my wretched sight make me an unreliable witness as to who it is that answers. Charlie Ryan of the *Freeman's Journal*—of all mankind the sharpest of sight, as well as best of shorthand writers and of friends—identifies him as a Tory Town Councillor of Cork who—poor man—spent the rest of his life reciting a penitential psalm protesting to Irish Public opinion: "Please, sir, it wasn't me!" The quite brutal reply at all events, to the kindly Bishop was: "That is a threat, sir, that is a threat!" spoken in the tone of one who intended to follow up the words with a blow. "It is no threat—it is an appeal for common decency," returns the Bishop, firmly. "I stand impartial in this matter as an American citizen." "Impartial!" retorted the same offensive voice: "You're a disloyal man, Sir. You refused to stand up for 'God Save the Queen' the other night, sir!"

As I am at long last recognised, the dozens of swaying figures, swirling around in the darkness in a devil's chorus of merciless triumph and a counter chorus of indignation and disgust, begin to concentrate in two groups around Kilbride and myself—our own friends much the scantier and shyer, but still of the gallant kind, a pressure from whose hand lasts for a life time—an American citizen, angry as an eagle, one of the Japanese War Minister's young men sidling up silently to squeeze my hand, an un-

known lady stealthily whispering a sympathy more exquisite still, a bluff English Squire, who had been a Gladstonian candidate, with the rosy cheeks of a cruddled Kentish pippin and the typical yellow British whiskers of the French caricatures, who stands silently apart between both camps and utters not a syllable, but has that about him which makes me suspect that if it comes to blows, his blows (and they ought to be pretty sturdy ones) will not be on the side of the big battalions.

It does not come to blows. however, for now a curious thing happens. A sudden chill and dumbness fall upon the never-never-shall-be-slavers. It seems that their foolish cheers prevented them from understanding the situation. Far from the sticky little Yankee tugboat accepting the repulse, it has been all the while lurching closer and closer alongside, and now—horror upon horrors' head!—after much confusion and darksome colloquy, the indomitable sea-dog on the bridge who, but a moment ago, seemed ready to brave the battle and the breeze for another thousand years rather than disappoint the patriots of the hurricane deck, is actually throwing a rope to the small stranger. The frozen truth is that the whoops of victory of the loyal poker-players, after the Captain's shout of no surrender, drowned the answer of the provoking wretches on board the tugboat, which was that they had the Medical Officer of Health on board, with an United States' permit authorising them to pick the two Irish rebel envoys out of Captain McMickan's passenger-list, and then bid a calm good night to the remainder. And there was no alternative for the old sea-dog, but a surrender at discretion, if he did not want one of the shore batteries to find him out the next morning with a United States round-shot. He growls, he storms, he does the needful with all imaginable surliness—but he does it. The rope is cast. The

Medical Officer of Health is on board. All is still uncertainty in the darkness. An exultant whisper runs around among the players of poker; it is for an American millionaire on board the tug has really come out. "Flapdoodle!" observes the American bird-of-freedom beside me. "Do you think any man in his proper wits would come out on a night like this for money? No, sir, they've come out for you, and they're going to have you—bet your bottom dollar!"

Ought I to go? We are reckoned to be some thirty miles from Brooklyn Bridge, in a harbour thronged with mighty shipping here, there and everywhere, invisible a few yards away in their shrouds of dead and clammy mist, the very dirges from their foghorns all but inaudible. I am afraid that, apart from the unsportmanship of leaving comrades in misfortune in the lurch, and steaming away in triumph, I should unhesitatingly have preferred to turn into bed and wait until the fog rolled by, only for that unlucky shout of exultation: "You shant get him!" from the hurricane deck. To make them eat their words became for the moment the one thing that made life worth living. I verily believe that if that tug were fated to wander into the night to the end of my days with no other provisions except clammy condensed fog on board, I should joyfully embark for the satisfaction of teaching the patriot pokermen that all the arrangements of the universe are not necessarily dictated by a growl from the British lion.

But there is no making sure what is happening amidst the hurry-scurrying and the confusion of Babel at the steerage gangway. I am told the Medical Officer of Health is descending the wooden ladder placed loosely against the great shipside to the tug. The vessels seem to be about to part company. Bewilderment reigns on board the tug. The scoffs and jeers of the poker party recommence. There

is nothing for it but to shout, and I shout over the side : " My name is Willaim O'Brien. Do the people on board want me ? " There came an answer in which all the wild yearning passion of the Irish exiles' hearts—all the pent-up emotion of three days' indomitable groping in the fog—spoke out. " Do you wish me to land to-night ? " Another roll of thunder from the tug. " Then I shall go," and I am ashamed to say the old Adam within me could not refrain from chortling : " if it was only to spite some cowardly creatures here on board." Another outbreak of snorts and groans of disappointment from the hurricane deck sounds now as feebly as a foghorn amidst the roar from the tugboat and from the Irish emigrants who are by this time crowding around with clenched fists and brows of thunder, not knowing precisely what has been going on, but divining it was an occasion anyhow when clenched fists might come in handy.

There is but a moment to clamber on the ladder which is swaying in a dizzy sort of way, to and from the ship's side with the heaving of the sea. Somebody attempts to drag me back, There is a moment's pause, and a confused conflict of voices in my ear. Fortunately, the delay is only for a moment, the next I am rapidly swinging down the rungs of the ladder. Not a whit too rapidly, for while there are still five or six rungs to be descended, the hawser connecting the tug with its huge neighbour snaps with a whirr, an angry swell sends the little craft lurching far apart, the ladder loses its grip on the *Umbria*, and ladder and self come tumbling down at a run. Had my weight being on it a few rungs higher up, this narrative would end here, or rather would never have been begun. As it is, massive General O'Beirne, with the agile instinct of the practised Indian fighter, is at the bottom of the ladder and unerringly " fields me out," so to say, in his brawny arms. " Had some

miscreant cut the rope?" is now the angry thesis among the bronzed and rugged soldier-men who press around in the half light. I never harboured a thought so injurious to human nature—even the human nature of a Briton's "Kazoo Band" in the sulks. None the less it is a comfort to hear it established on the verdict of General O'Beirne's prompt drumhead Courtmartial on the subject, that the rope was severed at a point closer to the tug than to the *Umbria*, and that its strands were doubtless wrenched asunder by the violence of the sea, and not by the gash of a knife.

Our friends have permits to bring off Kilbride and Bishop Ireland as well, but we have now been flung far by the tossing sea, and it is hopeless to re-establish communications. We can only hear a wild tumult of cheers, groans, and conflicting national Anthems, raging along the decks of the *Umbria*, while with volleys of Irish-American war-yells we bid good-bye to the monster liner, as to a nightmare as high as a mountain swallowed up in the belly of a still higher nightmare of solid fog. In the topsyturvey little cabin of the *J. E. Walker*, men with burly forms and fierce moustaches—old comrades of death and hardship gather around for the inevitable citizens' address and solemn reply, the while the boat's mad motions toss a few of the weaker vessels into sea-sickness, and send other weary vigil keepers fast asleep, and the reporters who never sleep, nor sicken, pin me into a corner for my "impressions." Surely, more affecting than any address ever penned by human hand was it to learn how my gallant friends had spent their three days and two nights circumnavigating the fog in search of the *Umbria* at instant peril of their lives, groping in this direction and in that, hailing the wrong ships, hornblowing to distraction, in hourly danger of some mortal collision, and never giving up until at

long last their wild halloo was answered from the *Umbria*—and all in order that a messenger from Ireland, bound on a hazardous mission, might get up, like a prince, a tide in advance of common men!

Envoys to America either “get a boom on” or fall frozen to death. Thanks to the obliging advertisement of a handful of cads on the hurricane deck of the *Umbria*, our Canadian mission boomed like a new Western silver mine. With that contagious ardour, half of a schoolboy, half of a knight of chivalry, with which the young Republic never fails to kindle at any tale of hectoring or foul play towards the weak, all New York was the next day flaming like a forest fire on reading the reporters’ account of the adventure. The first rumour that the rope had been deliberately cut to precipitate me into the sea aroused an indignation which it is now difficult to measure, but which could scarcely have been much fiercer if it had been an act of war between two nations. It was proposed to march a hundred thousand men to serenade the *Umbria* on arrival. The longshoremen of New York undertook to send her back to Britain with every ton of her cargo undischarged. To prevent reprisals that might have ended in a bloody tumult, it required a vehement interview of mine acquitting the hoodlums of this pitch of villainy, and making certain indulgent allowances for the temper of the unfortunate Captain who had lost his record, and the Britons driven to distraction by seeing the chief author to their vapoury incarceration borne off in triumph. It is entirely characteristic of America that my success in allaying the storm turned public opinion against Lord Lansdowne even more decisively than the black-guard fury of the hurricane deck.

Evidences of public sympathy multiplied in an amazing way. When I came down to breakfast the morning after my escape from fogland, I found one

of the parlours of the Hoffman House garrisoned by some thirty athletic young men in drilled attitudes. They turned out to be the Castleisland constables, who had thrown down their guns rather than serve in the eviction wars, and who that very morning had been, by the help of our friends Myles O'Brien and Major Byrne, provided with snug berths in a great dry-goods store ; but said one shy giant who took me into a recess for the purpose of explaining the feelings of self and comrades, they heard that here was trouble ahead in Canada, and they had been thinking that—if—if I did not object to the company of Irish policemen—whereat the poor fellow blubbered and got to the end of his eloquence ; but he might well let his rich country blush, and great awkward knotted limbs of steel tell the rest. If a certain softness of mine for the common run of the Royal Irish Constabulary has sometimes perplexed good haters in our own ranks, be it remembered that I had been in a treasonable correspondence with these young men which would have enabled them to command a higher price from Dublin Castle for my destruction than even the handsome berths in the dry goods store which they now proposed to throw up in order to bear me company to Canada.

There were more ambitious proposals—a mammoth demonstration in the Cooper Institute : presentation of the freedom of the City by the Commom Council : an unbroken blaze of fireworks at every station as far as the Canadian frontier—all designed to impress the Orange mind in Canada with the knowledge that the mighty Republic was standing in the border sentry-box at Rouse's Point with eagle eye and shouldered arms to see fair play. There were Irish-American grizzlies who did not propose to stop even at the frontier. I mind me well of one gnarled old soldier in particular, who had been through the hell-fire that swallowed up Meagher's Irish Brigade on

the slopes of Fredericksburg, and later had shut his shop, and kissed his children and taken the first train to Buffalo on the report that Fenian rifles were popping across the Canadian frontier. "Don't you be a fool," observed this man of gunpowder. "I know them Orange sons-of-a-blizzard you're going among. There is only one way of arguing with them—fireirons—and don't you forget it! Just you do your talking and let a hundred of our boys stand around. We won't be in the way unless we're wanted." It is a wonder that he continued the conversation with a person of such degenerate spirit when I endeavoured to explain to him that there appeared to be no intermediate course between trusting the Canadians wholly for fair play, or invading them at the head of an army with its banners. "This won't be out of order, anyhow," he said, in a low voice, drawing a nickel revolver from some mysterious coat-tail pocket and presenting it to me with the air of an indulgent father extending a lollypop to his offspring. I thought I was parting with my last title-deed to a reputation for spirit when even this shining toy had to be gently, but firmly, returned to its receptacle: but bottomless was the well of the old soldier's patience. "Wal, boss," were his last words, "I guess the boys will walk across to fetch back your bones, whatever."

For the rest, our first meeting was timed for Montreal the following night, and there was nothing for it but to go and to go alone.

CHAPTER XV

TORONTO IN ITS WARPAINT (1887)

Alone ! As Major Byrne bade me a last God-speed at the Central Depot and the cars rumbled away towards the frontier—after a day when all the news from Canada was of the “ Sons of England ” and the Ontario Orangemen springing to arms, of a man with the record of Professor Goldwin Smith speaking naked daggers and wilful murder, and even of the Catholic Archbishop Lynch of Montreal warning me off—a certain pang of desolation mingled with the funny reflection that my invading army, as it entered a Dominion to all seeming solidly hostile, was composed of one man, without so much as a paper parcel in the way of baggage. But, before I had time to mope, I was joined in the parlour-car by four men who could scarcely have given me a more comfortable sense of security if each of them had brought a regiment of rough-riders in his train. They were the special correspondents of the great New York dailies—Mr. James Clancy of the *Herald*, Mr. J. M. Wall of the *Tribune*, Mr. James A. Gill of the *World*, and Mr. Daniel F. Kellogg of the *Sun*. And here be it said that whether their chivalry was excited by the spectacle of a solitary man pitted against such desperate odds of sheer brutality, or by the daily supply of picturesque “ copy ” which the Odyssey never failed to produce, or maybe by some touch of professional pride in the fact that their brother penman, “ Editor O’Brien,” was for the moment the best

boosted man of action on the continent, these men's unerring instinct for the human side of the conflict, their contempt for the bluster of the bullies, their cheerful comradeship in danger, and the searchlight which every night they flung over the darkest exploits of Orange intolerance for the information of half a world, constituted one of the most astonishing demonstrations of the power of the Press which civilisation had yet witnessed. If the adventure did not end in some obscure deed of blood in this or that den of Orange barbarism, our escape must without a doubt be credited to the fact that through the fearless eyes of the four newspaper men who came to style themselves my Lifeguards, eighty millions of people were known to be ominously looking on.

Kilbride and Charlie Ryan, and my portmanteau with them, were still marooned on board their phantom-ship in the bay when I left New York. My first business in Montreal was the absurd one of sending out to purchase a clean shirt and a comb and brushes. I crossed the frontier in precisely the same trim in which I had scrambled over the side of the *Umbria*; to wit, in a tawny, Donegal homespun and a jerry hat of the same, the whole swathed in the caped and belted *cota mor* of Irish frieze which had comforted my slumbers on many a western and southern night mail train during the winter's wild raids and journeyings. The most luxurious of costumes on a blasted heath of Connacht with the night winds howling for your blood; but a more parlous experiment in facing an American audience. For your true American goes even to his grave in evening dress, and the quality of his broad cloth, the divine gloss on his shirt front, and the coruscations emitted by his *solitaire* have something of the sacredness of a religion. In sober earnest I am convinced that some stout friends' hearts sank a bit, if they would only admit it, when I stepped forward under

the gaze of four thousand Montrealese ladies and gentlemen in the unadorned garb of old Donegal. As Montreal turned out to be hardly less monotonously friendly than Cork, the pens of my Press escort, for lack of more sensational matter, took to picturing my wild hair and dormouse coloured tweed suit in every variety of crisp irreverence of which the American language is capable, until there began to be serious danger lest the American continent should become better acquainted with my queer jerry hat and Myles-na-Coppaleen top-coat than with the particulars of Lord Lansdowne's savageries at Luggacurran. It was with quite real relief I saw our prisoners from the *Umbria* arrive the next night with my portmanteau and a frock coat. And soon enough there was game on foot which gave my sartorial critics a sublimer range for their despatches.

To our amazement it was "roses, roses, all the way" from one end of Lower Canada to the other. The Irish and the French population and the bulk of the Liberal Party, even where they at first questioned the expediency of the visit, entirely accepted our contention that the people of Canada who paid their Governor-General were within their constitutional rights in passing judgment on the use made of their money. They had only to hear the facts to conclude that the use was an unjust and inhuman one. Lord Lansdowne's own line of defence in first loftily taking his stand on his prerogative, and then taking refuge in an appeal to the irrelevant bigotry of the Orangemen, alienated all decent democratic spirit in the country. The effect was completed by the murderous frankness with which his new Orange admirers prepared to put down free speech with revolver shots and organised rioting. M. Mercier, the Premier, did not hesitate to make us welcome to "the floor of the House" in his Provincial Parliament at Quebec. Mr. Charles Fitzpatrick, K.C., who has

since risen to the great dignity of Chief Justice of the Dominion, and Mr. Lemieux, the defender of the Manitoba rebel chief, Riel, and only the other day a distinguished member of the Dominion Cabinet, came on our platforms to listen and remained as outspoken sympathisers; the organ of Archbishop Lynch's own Cathedral at Montreal broke into "God Save Ireland" as the congregation streamed forth in my wake. Once again the pens of our New York ready-writers drawn for battle had to be turned into Pan's pipes to celebrate enervating picnics to the plains of Abraham, and the Montmorency Falls, and the joyous parting salute of cannon and illuminations from Champlain Street (half mediaeval France, half as racily Irish as Blarney Lane, Cork) on the glowing summer evening when the palatial river-steamer carried us away on the broad bosom of the St. Lawrence.

But the papers were already crackling with the reports of the very different fusillade that awaited us in Upper Canada; or rather from a third of its population, convulsed with a fit of Ulsteria which was regarded with mixed amusement and detestation by the majority of their countrymen. As soon as I learned that the Mayor of Toronto (a Mr. Howland) had been requisitioned to summon a mass meeting in the Queen's Park to demand my expulsion from Canada, I felt still strong enough in the public respect for free speech to telegraph to the Mayor in the following terms for permission to defend my mission before his citizens: "I perceive you have convened a meeting of citizens of Toronto to demand the official prohibition of my meetings. If you will, in the interests of fair play, secure me a hearing, I shall esteem it a privilege to attend your meeting and explain the motives and object of my visit."

The appeal might as well have been made to the waves of a roaring sea. The Mayor, who behaved with courtesy and good sense, was overborne by an

army of fanatics composed of twelve thousand Orangemen, and a secret society of the "Sons of England," six thousand strong, who acted without the smallest relevance to the Lansdowne controversy, but were worked into a frenzy, like that of the Belfast Anniversaries, by a comic mixture of hatred of Popery, with a childlike faith in the authenticity of the forged letters traced by the hand of the respectable Pigott, which the *Times* had just launched at the head of Parnell.

For the honour of old age, it is a pity that the last public act of Professor Goldwin Smith's not unenlightened life should have been a speech in the Queen's Park worthy of the intellectual level of the least reputable of the listeners who translated his words into brickbats and gunshots. A Protestant Bishop of the suggestive name of Sullivan, gained for himself a no less *triste* distinction on the occasion. Lord Lansdowne himself was indiscreet enough to choose that moment for quitting Government House for Toronto, and thus risking a fresh spark within a yard of the cask of gunpowder that was known to be on the point of exploding there. The explosion did not fail to come off. St. Andrews' Hall, which was hired for our meeting, shut its doors against us, so did every other public building in the city. The Orange Grand Masters improved the hints from the platform into open and insolent boasts that we should never be allowed to enter the city, or, at the worst, never be allowed to leave it unless in our coffins. But now a phenomenon occurred of auspicious omen for the greatness which has since raised free Canada to a world-power. For the intolerance which disgraced Toronto, so far from intimidating our friends, created a notable reaction in our favour, and a very general condemnation of the Governor-General, among the wisest elements in the Canadian Parliament and in the Press. The principal Liberal organ,

the *Montreal Herald* "which (it was mournfully cabled to the London Press) was previously adverse to the Irish visitor, now approves his course, and declares if Lord Lansdowne has any answer, the public will expect it from him." The conservative organ, the *Gazette*, was no less severe on the "blundering and intemperate language" of Professor Goldwin Smith who, it cruelly reminded him, "has long been out of sympathy with Canadian opinion," and Mayor Howland's disgust was expressed in a blunt declaration that "Mr. Goldwin Smith's speech has aroused prejudices which make a riot seem inevitable."

The Governor-General himself in his reply to the resolutions of the "loyalists' meeting" in the Queen's Park, could not refrain from avowing his chagrin in the words: "It has been the source of the deepest regret to me that those who have sought for political purposes to stir up strife between me and the tenants on a part of my Irish estates should have been for a time successful."

Our friends, boycotted in our design to be content with a modest indoor meeting, announced that the meeting must now be held in the most conspicuous place in Toronto, viz., the Queen's Park, and from the very platform from which the blood-thirsty Professor and the Bishop had hurled their comminations. The sensational riot of the following day in a surprise attack upon two or three of us, as we were taking an evening stroll, led the public to forget that in the real trial of strength in the Queen's Park, the boasts of Mr. Goldwin Smith's disciples were completely put to shame. They failed even to drown our voices. The newspaper correspondents estimated the assemblage at fifteen thousand. The banks were closed, and the Orange operatives of the factories were let loose; so that the main forces of the intolerants was undoubtedly included in the muster. They made

terrifying faces and bellowed forth their curses in all the approved forms of Chinese warfare, and in the course of their three or four hours' roaring made three separate and very resolute charges to gain possession of the platform. They were favoured by the benevolent neutrality of an enormous force of police who kept steadily never minding when wave after wave of the Orange attack surged towards the platform : but on each occasion as the Orange tide was forced back by the magnificent tenacity of the Nationalists, it was upon the Nationalists, and not upon their assailants the truncheons of the police battalions fell in all their fury. But the Nationalists, although doubtless considerably in the minority, to the end maintained an unbreakable wall around the platform against rioters and police combined. The Chairman of our meeting, Mr. Mulligan (the Law partner of the Conservative Prime Minister of the Dominion) repeatedly told the Police Commandant (a Major Grissell, or some such name) that his men were the only effective disturbers of the meeting. The self command and good humour with which danger and responsibility seldom fail to inspire me, joined with a voice not quite unequal to the tumult of battle, enabled me to devote my speech largely to bantering the clumsy fanatics upon their inferiority to the House of Commons in the arts of howling down an Irish opponent.¹ They charged and charged again,

¹ The account of the next morning's papers fairly summarises the comments of the average citizen on the day's doings : "The scene was one of the wildest that could be witnessed and baffles description. . . . Mr. O'Brien was received with loud cheering, and with equally loud groaning, fiendish yells, and curses, and the singing of 'God Save the Queen.' This was kept up throughout his entire speech. Mr. O'Brien stuck to his work, however, coolly and deliberately. He faced the mass of his opponents with the greatest courage, and was supported with intense enthusiasm and spirit by his sympathisers. His voice seemed to acquire additional strength as he proceeded and he got every sentence out with clarion clearness above the turmoil."

this time within a yard or two of the platform with uplifted clubs : but once more our own trusty phalanx sent them reeling back into the arms of the police, and I was able to ask free Canada to note the collapse of Lord Lansdowne's method of answering a plain indictment. The day wound up with a banquet of enormous dimensions at the Rossin House, and toasts of legitimate thankfulness for the victorious close of an experiment not without its anxieties.

This was the result in the open light of day, and with due notice to all concerned. The next day the Rossin House was astir with callers of all politics or of none, soberly thankful that the first meeting in the Queen's Park had been unaggressively but effectively answered by the second. There were reports that a sullen sense of defeat was still smouldering in the Orange quarter, but there was so little semblance of excitement in the streets that when I proposed to walk off the fatigues of the day by a stroll in the golden evening air, a stranger would as readily have anticipated an earthquake as that even our anonymity should be penetrated. The little airing was so unpremeditated that, half an hour before, Kilbride and Charlie Ryan, and the American newspaper correspondents had dispersed to see the town for themselves, confident that there were no storm signals to threaten their evening's amusement. The Prime Minister's colleague, Mr. Mulligan, alone accompanied me as we left the Rossin House : a young barrister named Cahill joined us in the street outside. We had turned the first corner of the block containing the hotel buildings, on our way to the lake shore, before we were recognised. Even then we had entered the second street of the block before we noticed that the group was beginning to form behind us, and that a policeman had taken up his position in their midst. Every moment there were additions to the group, and there began a muttering of growls and

curse which left no doubt of their temper. Mr. J. M. Wall of the *New York Tribune*, who had just heard of our departure from the hotel, hurried up with the news that a torchlight procession was being organised to escort Lord Lansdowne to and from the theatre, and that the streets were getting excited. Mr. Mulligan decided that it would be wiser to abandon our walk and return to the hotel by the third street of the block.

No blow had yet been struck, and our growling escort remained all the time behind our backs, although pressing closer and closer. We four had got almost to the corner of the third street, walking at a leisurely pace with a view to avoiding a rush, when from behind the blow of a heavy club on the head of Mr. Cahill laid him prostrate on the footpath beside me in a pool of blood. As I turned, the miscreant who had struck the foul blow—a red-bearded mechanic, whose face was yellow with passion or cowardice—darted back into the crowd who also fell back a pace or two, as it seemed to me, in a moment of remorse. Unfortunately, the policeman who might still have saved the situation took to his heels in a fit of the most abject panic it has ever been my fate to witness. When questioned at a police investigation into his conduct a few days afterwards, the poor wretch made a defence which, if it did not smack of Sparta, had a good deal to commend it to the indulgence of the average Sunday citizen: “Well, if O’Brien wanted to throw away his life, I did not want to throw away mine; I had my wife and children to think of.”

The defection of the policeman, at all events, was the signal for an outburst of savagery, naked and unashamed. The mob poured in upon us before and behind to the cry of: “To the bay with him!” and by a curious paradox it was to the stones that now began to hurtle around our heads we owed the

fact that the prudent gentlemen did not for a minute or two close in upon us with their clubs to stretch us by the side of Mr. Cahill, if we were not to be reserved for still more drastic treatment.

During the momentary respite, we did succeed in turning into the street at the far end of which lay our hotel; but it was only to find ourselves the isolated targets for whole volleys of paving stones delivered by a now maddened and yelling mob who, however, were sufficiently astute tacticians to keep themselves outside the range of fire, in order to make our fate the more secure. Mr. Wall, who had shown a cheery intrepidity throughout the evening's excitements, was now felled at my side by a paving-stone which set the blood gushing from his forehead. My own silk hat—the highly absurd “white plume of Navarre,” which to-night, not for the last time, in those wild Canadian nights, served as the bull's eye for many a marksman—was happily knocked off by one of the missiles. It is one of the curiosities of human conduct in such moments, that it was as I stooped to recover the head piece which had to some extent become my flag, that I received a tremendous thud which broke one of my ribs, and made me sink on one knee upon the side-path. At this moment some Nationalist, whom I was never able to identify, that I might prove to him my gratitude, pushed me by main force into an adjoining agricultural implement and bicycle store which happened to be that of a fellow countryman of the honoured name of Lalor, from Queen's County. As we entered, every pane of glass in the great plate-glass front was knocked about our ears by a shower of brickbats from the victorious mob who now, with the bellows of wild beasts, followed up their brickbats with a charge on the stores.

Once more the resourcefulness of my unknown deliverer was my safety. He marched me straight through

the bicycle stores, and out by the gateway at the rear, just as we could hear Lord Lansdowne's friends storming the front entrance. We emerged into an apparently uninhabited laneway. My friend, who knew his ground, stopped and knocked at a door which was opened with much caution by the proprietor, in whose ears the yells of the wreckers of the bicycle stores were striking with something of the terror of a hell let loose. He was a Dublin Protestant, the master of a vast tailors' workshop where most of the workers were Irish. "Will you save O'Brien's life?" my friend whispered in a low, firm voice. The scared proprietor seemed to hesitate, and for a few moments that might have been as many hours, made no reply. Then he said only this: "Come in," and shut the door softly behind us. We were at once in a friendly harbour. The tailors jumped from their cross-legged stations to greet me with a hundred fond questions about myself and about the homeland. This one had been "out" in the Tallaght Rising, another had served in General John O'Neill's raid on Fort Erie. A knock at the door was followed by a sudden silence and the lowering of the gas jets. It was a policeman—a burly Tipperary man—who had called for the repair of his tunic which was half rent asunder in the tumult in the Queen's Park the previous day. He instantly recognized me, but with a grip of the hand as reassuring as if I had known him for a lifetime. The rioters, he told us, were furious at missing me in the bicycle stores, and after wrecking and plundering the place, had just marched off to join the Governor-General's torchlight procession from the theatre. But the neighbourhood was still alive with prowlers pursuing their search and another hour or two elapsed before their howls died away, and our police friend thought it safe to attempt a return to the hotel. This he at last effected after groping through a labyrinth of dark laneways,

by "giving me a back"—a broad Tipperary one—to climb a high wall bounding the yard of the Rossin House. I dropped over into the dark unknown with a groan of pain which was my first reminder of the inconvenience of a broken rib.

Our friends in a first floor parlour of the Rossin House could not have been much more startled if it was my ghost they beheld. They were sitting in silence with the windows close shuttered and the gaslights at a glimmer. All sorts of rumours as to my fate had been circulating, and it seemed scarcely possible I should have escaped the vengeance of the Orangemen now yelling in their thousands in front of the hotel, after having been harangued by Lord Lansdowne whom their loyal arms drew triumphantly from the theatre amidst a blaze of law-and-order-loving torches. Among the fire-tried friends of that critical hour, I will always remember with gratitude a number of Liberal Members of Parliament, who had just returned by the night train from Ottawa, and came straight to the Rossin House to assure me that the brutalities of the men who had done Lord Lansdowne the evil turn of making his cause their own, had aroused the indignation of every friend of freedom in Canada.

Then happened one of those occurrences which irradiate the darkest night of suffering for those who fight the losing battle of Ireland. The strains of a brass band and a roar of passionate cheering announced the arrival of some new accession to the multitude outside. Something familiar in the sounds made me go to the window to look out. The manager of the Rossin House—a gallant friend not easily to be intimidated—sprang to my side: "For God's sake, stand back!" he cried. "The house is going to be wrecked." "Why, nonsense," I was excited enough to reply: "They are playing 'The Wearing of the Green!'" And it was really so. Rumours had reached



the Irish quarter of the dastardly doings of the Orange ambuscade, and without lead or signal, the population rose up and poured out into the thick of the Orange aggressors with the music of their distant land stirring their pulses and the impassioned allegiance of their hearts welling indomitably up. It is with regret one is forced to take cognizance of another gross lapse on the part of the high officials of the Toronto police. We were now all at the window watching the irresistible, but perfectly bloodless onset of the Nationalist host, by their very impact pushing the Orange rioters almost without resistance from the wide space before the hotel, when we saw Major Grissell's dense battalion of police, hitherto the motionless observers of the Orange Witches' Sabbath, charge into the midst of the advancing Nationalists, and scatter their band of music and their followers mercilessly with their truncheons and with the swords of their mounted police. It was a scarcely less discreditable service to Lord Lansdowne than the brickbats and clubs of his unofficial partisans. But the Toronto Nationalists had saved the Rossin House, and spoiled the Orange stomach for any further ruffianism, and had shown that in the night surprise, as in the Queen's Park, they had only to see the whites of the eyes of the enemies of free speech to make all Canada as merry over their defeat as it had been angered by their boasts.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME OTHER CANADIAN NIGHTS

(1887)

The Canadian people in general had displayed a broadness of sympathy and a stern reprehension of the ways of the Orange Grand Masters which would have made me content to let their judgment do its work without further appeal on my part, only that the cabled misrepresentations of what had occurred at Toronto, spreading the impression that the quite accidental street assault upon three unarmed men represented some overwhelming revulsion of Canadian feeling against us, made it necessary at any cost to complete our programme of meetings. As chance would have it, these meetings had all to be held within a fortnight in order to permit of our return to Ireland at the earliest possible date, to confront the Coercion Act at that moment hacking its way through Parliament. They had, therefore, to be held while the passions excited by the taste of blood at Toronto were at red heat, and two of them in venues—Kingston and Hamilton—which were historic strongholds of the Orange Organisation.

What happened there in a *crescendo* scale of violence was what had happened in Toronto. In Ottawa, the preliminary threatenings wholly miscarried. We were escorted to and from our meetings in the midst of a monome of students from the Oblate College joyously shouting their 'Varsity yell and with their

forest of sticks upreared, and the enlightened gentlemen who promised not to make two bites of us, after a brush with the outer rank of our phalanx, contented themselves with a dropping fire of paving-stones, and a distant noise of fainthearted imprecations and loyal minstrelsy. Of the national capital I retain a sunbright memory of generous friendship and noble tolerance.

It was a different matter in Kingston. Kingston was the shrine of that species of "conditional loyalty" which would have the Prince of Wales pass under a triumphal arch flaming with orange banners and emblems of *No Popery*, and when he gently remonstrated tore down every other decoration in his honour and gave the Heir to the Throne a scarcely more flattering reception than my own. This time the Orange Grand Master in command (one Marshall) began the usual campaign of frightfulness with a public meeting, at which, in the course of a lively torrent of balderdash, he issued an order as plain as a pikestaff for my assassination. One could not help speculating on the notions of logic of a personage who in the very act of decreeing my death in order to suppress free speech, exercised that right himself with a diabolical *sans gêne* which in any other country save free Canada must have landed him in the penitentiary. But what chance against Grand Master Marshall and his babes of grace had the six apologetic-looking policemen who represented the entire strength of law and order in Kingston? The poor men were mustered solemnly in front of our hotel on our arrival, and were never heard of more during the night's proceedings—no doubt for the same reason for which their colleague fled at top speed at the first hint from a bludgeon in Toronto. For, to make assurance doubly sure, the Grand Master had called up the local company of Volunteers, with their rifles and bayonets, on the pretext of a drill practice. In the

expressive phrase of the mining-camps "the town was their own."

The fidelity of the race who, alone of mankind, shine their brightest in a losing battle, was again the outstanding characteristic of the night. The Nationalist minority assembled with a redoubled zest, and the Volunteers, the Orange Lodges and the unregimented hooligans who were swarming in the square outside did not venture upon any feat more heroic than shying a few stones through the windows during the two hours while the meeting was in progress. The trouble began when the dusk came, and the meeting was breaking up. As I left the hall the watchword: "Look out for the man with the plug-hat!" was raised in all directions. A rush of men armed with bludgeons and clubbed guns came straight for us through the half-light, with the cries of Red Indians swinging their tomahawks. A murderous bludgeon was raised over my head, and two no less murderous eyes were directing it. My "plug-hat" was by a stroke of genius, snatched from my head at the moment, and was seen no more until it was presented to me unbattered three hours later at the hotel. The bludgeon missed its destination in the confusion. The Red Indians to their fury found themselves off the trail. There was one other "plug-hat" in the assemblage, that of a blameless Justice of the Peace, who had honoured our meeting by appearing in all his majesty. The war-whoops were instantly diverted in pursuit of this elderly gentleman, who, indiscreetly taking flight, brought the uplifted clubs and gunstocks whirling madly in his train. A propitious fate gave me for guardian-angel a splendid young Irishman named Ryan (since, it is a joy to know, one of the foremost and most honoured citizens of Kingston), who while the tumult was raging darkly all around us, thrust me through a gateway, leading, of all places in the world, into the coffin-store of an

Orange undertaker. The uproar gradually grew fainter far away, and we were meditating a dash for our hotel when there began to be heard the tramp and the yells of another approaching multitude. A thrill of hope made music in my soul as I distinguished the notes of "God Save Ireland" in the wild chorus sung by the oncoming strangers. It was succeeded by an uncomfortable coldness in the bones when Mr. Ryan explained that the American marching tune "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching," to which the Irish National Anthem had been fitted with words, had been appropriated also by the Canadian Orangemen for a war-song of their own celebrating the defeat of the Fenian Invasion, and this was the chorus, assuring us that :

"Toronto's on their track
And we'll beat the rebels back,"

which came crashing in upon us from a thousand throats from the roadway, a few yards distant from our place of refuge. But it never occurred to the warriors that the object of their search was to be found among the coffins of their brother-Orangeman. They swept away to wreck a newspaper-office in default of more appetising game, and by midnight the Nationalist pickets sent out in all directions in search of us were re-assembled in safety in our hotel, comparing their adventures and their wounds, making scornful answer to the Orange Mayor who called to proffer his protection when it was no longer needed, and making the welkin ring when a priest arrived with a letter of sympathy and indignation from the Bishop of Kingston (Dr. Cleary, a friend of olden days in Dungarvan).

The next morning we crossed the Lake to the American shore on our way to our last destination in Upper Canada. At Cape Vincent we were greeted

at the gangway by the Harbour Master (if that be his meet style and title)—a Yankee of the Yankees, chin-tufted, self-assured, and all alive with the benevolent vigour of an American eagle opening its wings to welcome us—who made this quaint speech to me: “Sir, America salutes you. We’ll fix up that damaged rib of yours all right. I guess it’s *you* have ribroasted the lot of them.” My life-guardsmen of the Press had in sober truth constituted me the idol of the hour in the great Republic. Uncle Sam’s flattering allusion to my broken rib was not needed now to remind me of the aches and catchings of the breath which had been almost forgotten in the excitements of the past three days, but by this time were having their revenge. I had been bandaged up for the journey to Ottawa and Kingston with an amazing success, but a fractured rib, complicated with a pleuritic attack not easily distinguishable from pleurisy, together with an inflammation of the base of one of the lungs, not to talk of a body bruised and contused in half-a-dozen other directions, are not to be long gainsaid. To be candid, my one ambition in life was to go to bed and stop there until our final fixture for Hamilton. Speech-making and band-and-banner work may be endured to the last pitch of exhaustion so long as a great public purpose is being served, but when it is a matter of superfluous holiday hooraying it has always been an insupportable burden to one like myself, who must needs exert every bodily muscle and energy of soul in public work, or do it badly. But what was there to do with a generous-hearted people, more interested than ever at sight of a wounded favourite, but to submit my body with the best grace I could to the sort of glorified public funeral that was before me?

At the city of Watertown, where we had to change trains for Niagara, I was affectionately hauled out of

my car by the Mayor and citizens, and set upon my legs for what is known as a "reception" at the principal hotel, the "reception" consisting of the entire adult population, a Congressman, a Judge, a General, a Clergyman, or a crossing sweeper in his shirt sleeves, on a footing of superb Republican equality, coming in at one door and passing out at the opposite one, the Mayor introducing as they pass, each of the hospitable public administering an excruciating shake-hands and some marvellously apt "sentiment," and the stranger responding with the highly idiotic observations proper to such occasions. Before half the town had passed through, I put an end to the festivities by fainting clean off, and had no further introduction to go through except to a doctor, whom I could have worshipped when he spirited me away through a back-door to my train for Niagara. By the time we reached Niagara, I had become very ill indeed, with the sense of stunned relief of one who had just been successfully shooting the Falls. One clear day remained before the start for Hamilton. The doctors (and it is characteristic of the idealism of this wonderful country that no less than three distinguished physicians—Dr. Doyle, of Syracuse, Dr. Casey, of Rochester, and Dr. Campbell, of Niagara—made their way to my bedside from opposite ends of the State, by an instinct of their own, and, superfluous to add, without fee), the doctors diagnosed internal injuries present and possible, which in their view would render the journey to Hamilton mere madness. However, the kind of stuff cabled to the London Press and the flag-wagging and bravado with which Hamilton was aflame on the reports of my illness left no alternative but to make the attempt. And, if the truth must be told, the anxious deputations from far and near which stormed my bedroom all that pain-ridden Sunday involved little less risk.

Accordingly, bandaged up to the armpits like a

trussed fowl, I was early next morning on the cars for the frontier close at hand. The station-master at the frontier depot—a grizzled soldier of the Civil War named O'Donoghue, who had been “out” in the O'Neill Raid—would insist upon my accepting a pious relic of miraculous quality, adding with an unpremeditated profanity which it may be hoped the Recording Angel failed to hear: “If anything happens to you, by God! you'll have all Buffalo over the line to-morrow morning in every railroad car this depot can produce.” He whispered a more disconcerting hint that a first contingent of armed Buffalo men was actually on board “to see fair.” By ill-chance, our arrival coincided with the Queen's Birthday, when the local regiment of Volunteers were mustering for a review in an atmosphere charged with the double-current electricity of Imperialism and of the Belfast anniversaries. Even early in the day everybody appeared to be carrying a gun, or exploding joy petards. But once more our incomparable Nationalists raised their undaunted heads, and so long as the daylight lasted nobody was bold enough to give them battle.

The chance of the terrorists came as usual when some five thousand Nationalists were assembled within the Rink buildings and the night was beginning to fall. What followed may be most conveniently related in the words of a newspaper despatch of the following morning:

“On Mr. O'Brien coming forward the entire audience rose to their feet and waved hats and handkerchiefs enthusiastically. Mr. O'Brien spoke in a feeble and low tone of voice and with great brevity. He said he rejoiced at the mixture of creeds, parties and nationalities on this platform. He said he had come suffering from great pain and in a somewhat exhausted condition of body to address them. He did not pretend to be more than flesh and blood,

and flesh and blood were not altogether proof against the argument of the bludgeon and the paving stone. But these were the only arguments which had been offered as yet in Canada by the men who pretended to be Lord Lansdowne's friends. . . . Towards the close of the meeting a violent crowd assembled outside the Rink, groaning Mr. O'Brien. The disorder outside became so tumultuous that the chief of the police, Mr. McKinnon, read the Riot Act, and charged the crowd with his men more than once. Several people were knocked down, but the police, owing to the fewness of their numbers, were unable to disperse the mob. On the conclusion of the meeting, at about twenty minutes to eleven, Mr. O'Brien left the hall and was escorted to a closed carriage in waiting. A determined band of Orangemen lay in ambush in one of the streets and rushing out surrounded the carriage. . . . In the carriage which conveyed Mr. O'Brien from the Rink to the hotel there were also seated Messrs. Kilbride, Roache and McMahan. On the box seat were J. Nelson (coachman) and Mr. T. P. O'Brien. On its way to the hotel the carriage had to cross the open market-place in order to reach the street in which the hotel is situated. On the way to the hotel, when the open market was reached, a body of Orangemen in ambush, apparently a small knot of determined men, who, there is strong reason to believe, came up from Toronto, rushed forward. Immediately the sharp ring of revolver shots was heard, but the first shots passed unheeded by the occupants of the carriage, who believed they were rocket discharges. In a moment, however, they were undeceived, for a second volley was quickly fired, and Mr. T. P. O'Brien, the gentleman seated on the box with the driver, cried out: 'My God! that was a revolver bullet grazed my hat.' The crack of revolvers then followed in quick succession. The next minute the coachman,

Nelson, dropped the reins and exclaimed: 'I am shot.' Eight shots were fired in this volley, and the mark of one remains on the panel of the carriage door. Too true, Nelson was shot, and through the left wrist. With great presence of mind, the market-place at the time being lighted with the flash of revolver shots, Mr. T. P. O'Brien seized the reins and whipped the horses into a gallop. They came at a headlong pace into the midst of another mob at the hotel. This mob groaned and hissed and pelted mud and eggs. The scene at the moment was one of the highest excitement. The police appeared to be powerless. The square was in possession of a raging multitude. The air was thick with the smell of powder, and high above the shouts of the crowd was heard an occasional revolver shot. The police drew their batons, and, though a small body, struggled strenuously to keep back the ragamuffins from the hotel and the carriage. As luck would have it, the carriage door was stiff and would not open. After a short delay, after a scene of the wildest excitement, Mr. McMahon, one of the occupants of the carriage, forced his way through the carriage window, presented his revolver, and with the weapon in his hand, faced the howling and infuriated mob until Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Kilbride and Mr. Roache were extricated and had gained admittance to the hotel. Nelson, the coachman, was carried off to hospital. A strong cordon of police was drawn round the hotel, and, as I telegraph, the revolver shots are still going off and the market-place presents the appearance of a battlefield."

The life of Nelson, the unfortunate driver of "the hack" (the Canadian for street carriage), was only saved by the amputation of his hand. It was the knowledge that Nelson was himself an Orangeman which prompted Tom O'Brien, of Buffalo, to take the precaution of sitting beside him on the coach-

man's seat. Had he not been there to pick up the reins when they fell from Nelson's wounded hand, we should have fallen an easy prey to the assassins. It is a curious fact in psychosis that the short, sharp volleys of revolver shots on this occasion came as a positive relief after the more brutal ignominy of the stoning and clubbing at Toronto and Kingston. It remains only to be noted that after the customary ambushade, which could only have succeeded by surprise and under cover of darkness, the plotters of the night's riot did not reassert themselves by so much as a hostile cry the next afternoon on our departure from Hamilton.

Our return to Montreal for our leavetaking of Canada marked a change of public feeling as startling as that from the wintry snows that still shrouded a good part of Lower Canada on our first visit, to the glory of spring flowers and orchard blossoms that covered the country on our return after three weeks. There was literally no longer any visible or audible section of the population against us. It was estimated that there were ten thousand torches in the torchlight procession which traversed the city, accompanied by a dozen bands, and a continuous fusillade of rockets. Innumerable houses—in some districts entire streets—were illuminated. The square in which some thirty thousand people were being addressed became such a furnace of fiery illuminations that in the midst of the proceedings the entire Fire Brigade dashed up at a gallop upon an alarm that the city was in flames. The French population, friendly but somewhat puzzled before, were now frantically with us. They refused to disperse until I had to make a speech to them in their own tongue in whatever French of Stratford-atte-Bowe I could command. No newspaper in English or French had any longer a cordial word to say for Lord Lansdowne. Most of them sternly reproved him for falling back upon defenders as to

whose methods they did not conceal their disgust and shame. An attempt to get the Dominion House of Commons to adjourn in order to join in acclaiming the Governor-General on his return to the capital from the seat of war did not find a seconder in the entire assembly.

Must it be confessed that my return as Member of the Imperial Parliament in the meantime was not altogether without its influence in making "Editor O'Brien" a head and shoulders taller in Canadian and no less in American esteem? It ought to have been mentioned that on the morning after one of the nights of horror in Upper Canada I received a cable-gram from Parnell (himself at the moment only barely recovered from a new access of his malady) in some such words as these: "Let me beg you will not disappoint the wish of all our colleagues." The meaning of this cryptic message was only revealed when I came into the breakfast-room and was rushed at by dozens of kind people flourishing the morning newspapers, in which the cable announced that in my absence and without the remotest consultation with me I had just been returned to Parliament unopposed as member for North-East Cork. It was notorious that my temperamental horror of Parliamentary life was not an affectation, but a craze that haunted me with ever-increasing intensity through all my public life. It was, no doubt, mainly that I regarded the House of Commons as Caradoc did the Golden House of the Cæsars—as the seat of power of Ireland's enemies, the market-place of their cynical and corrupt party intrigues, although for me, as for most men, not without its higher fascinations. I first entered the place by a compulsion as unavoidable and (incredible as it may seem) at least as disagreeable as I first entered one of Her Majesty's prisons. It was not a matter of virtue, but of personal peculiarity, that my one overmastering personal ambition in the

House of Commons was to get out of it, and by some freak of perverse destiny it took me twenty-five years to accomplish my final release from the unwelcome distinction. It was because Parnell and the rest knew all this, and remembered that, after my welcome defeat in South Tyrone, no less than eight of my kind colleagues telegraphed to make me a public proffer of their seats to no effect, that they had taken care not to breathe a word of my re-election until the deed was done. The facts are mentioned here only because the instant and amusing increase of my importance which followed the announcement in Canada and the United States proved that Parnell and the others had shown as much political sagacity as personal tenderness in timing their remembrance of their distant colleague for that particular hour.

CHAPTER XVII

A PERIL WORSE THAN BULLETS (1887)

In the United States the flow of enthusiasm was more astonishing still. My body was a sufficiently troublesome burden of aches and bruises to make the sleeping-car, even without the sleep, the brightest corner of heaven to be hoped for on the return journey, but the outpouring of feeling in the Great Republic promised advantages to the Irish cause so enormous and unlooked for that it was no longer possible to have any reserves in one's self-abandonment. All through the night the delegations of citizens who invaded the train had to be made welcome and replied to in the classic "few words" with such grace as a wounded pleura would permit. It did not, indeed, seem commonly decent to indulge any feeling except one of heartfelt thankfulness for the tide of passionate national sentiment that swept me along through such scenes as that in the Boston Theatre, where John Boyle O'Reilly, whose magical personal charm made the romantic Fenian convict the most beloved man in the New England of the Blue Laws, took the chair; the banquet at the Parker House, where the foremost men in the literary, university, and political life of Massachusetts were, without a moment's notice, summoned to "offer a sentiment," and answered the call with a wit, a wealth of words, and a high idealism which had no equal in any chance assembly of men I have ever since listened to; and the reception in the State Legislature of Albany where, with a much

more miserable diffidence than any experienced in presence of the Orange braves in Canada, I was led up, through "a rising House," to the chair of Speaker Husted, famous in State history as "The Bald Eagle of the Rappahannock," and from that august eminence had to stutter out my poor reply to the Bald Eagle's vibrant praises and the Legislature's uproarious enthusiasm in our old cause. But happy scenes such as these, like happy nations, must remain without a history.

From this blue heaven there all of a sudden burst a bombard which reminded us, if ever a man of intelligence is in danger of forgetting it, how tragically like public life is, and must always remain, to "the city of honey and hemlock" that poisoned Socrates, having first worshipped him as a demi-god. Among many offers of public receptions there came one announcing that the working classes of New York were organising a mammoth procession in our honour. As the signatories bore Irish names and the proposed resolutions were in common form, there seemed to be no reason for declining the compliment. The manifestation was advertised for Union Square on the evening of the day on which we were travelling to New York. At some station an hour or two from New York our train was boarded by rival deputations with the news that the city was divided into two armed camps on the subject of the reception. One delegation, who were the official representatives of the Irish National League, came out to warn us that we were the victims of a Socialist plot in the interest of Henry George's candidature for the Mayoralty of New York, and that our participation would mean the alienation of every reputable friend of the Irish Cause. The rival one roundly denounced the others as the Sachems of Tammany Hall, and in language funnily compounded of flattery and truculence gave us to understand that if we allowed ourselves to be

captured by Tammany and broke our promise to attend we should be guilty of an insult to the workers of New York which would never be forgiven. In a word, both combined to celebrate our escape from an Orange Gehenna in Canada by plunging us into another and a worse one newly lighted by our friends.

There was little more than an hour in which to make up our minds, but we were not long in eliciting by cross-examination of both the delegations a set of facts which left no loophole for doubt as to our duty. The report of the Reception Committee in the morning papers was, indeed, in itself decisive. It was presided over by a Mr. John McMickan, who a week or two previously had presided over a demonstration in honour of Mr. P. J. Tynan, the reputed "Number One" of the conspiracy of the Invincibles. The vision of Parnell reading in London the cablegram announcing that his representative had taken to the Socialist platform under the patronage of the chief bottle-holder of "Number One," and thus giving a triumphant corroboration of the letters *The Times* had just printed in *facsimile*, purporting to reveal secret relations of a murderous character between the Irish leader and the Invincibles, enabled me to realise at a flash to the brink of what an abyss we had been led. Two other deceits scarcely less unworthy had been attempted. Among the unobjectionable resolutions submitted to us, there had now been interpolated a resolution expressly pledging the meeting to Henry George's repudiation of any right of private property in land. It was no business of ours to pass judgment for or against the doctrines of "Progress and Poverty," but in attempting to surprise us into a denial of all private property in land, we were required to make public recantation of the basic principle of our movement, which was the extension of private property to five hundred thousand Irish occupiers and to abandon Parnell's uncom-

promising stand against Georgian Nationalisation. There was one other resolution carefully omitted from the draft furnished to us. It was one pledging the meeting unequivocally to take sides with Father McGlynn, a priest of excellent but headstrong character, whose excommunication by his ecclesiastical superiors threatened at this moment to convulse the Catholic community of New York with something scarcely distinguishable from a schism. Here were three distinct issues (two of them fraudulently concealed from us until the last moment) on which, upon pretext of doing us honour, we were summoned to identify ourselves with International Socialism and bid defiance to Irish, to Catholic, and to American convictions in the most sensitive tenets of the three—and all for the sake of the *beaux yeux* of Mr. Henry George.

Nevertheless, it is difficult now to realise against what a mountain of misrepresentation our decision had to be taken. In four or five hours the meeting would be gathering, and there was no possibility of conveying to them the explanation of our absence. The Central Labour Union, of which Mr. McMickan was the Chairman, wielded the full strength of Socialism to which the success of Henry George's candidature promised to give the mastery of New York. The passions kindled by Father McGlynn's excommunication were fiercer still. The future of the Irish movement in America might well be lost by the cry that Labour and McGlynn had been betrayed to Capitalism and "Tammany" at a juncture when nothing seemed to be able to resist them. Happily even that danger was dwarfed by the certainty that to walk into the trap that was now manifestly set for us would be to overwhelm Parnell before his enemies by exhibiting him and his movement as the open allies of Socialism, Anti-Clericalism, and the bloody-minded politics of the Phoenix Park. As the evening wore on

our parlour at the Hoffman House was flooded with all descriptions of foreign revolutionaries, first entreating and then furiously insisting that we must fulfil our engagement. As is apt to happen in such crises, the moderates, once assured of our determination, left us to our fate and were little heard of more for the night. The Irish officials of the Labour Union began to be shaken by our representations that we were here neither for nor against anything in American politics and must think of nothing but the interests of our homeland. Their foreign comrades—Germans, Frenchmen, and Russians—men with the shaggy hair, hungry eyes and haggard cheeks of revolutionists, tried in many a desperate hour—were raging to find the opportunity of their lives slipping through their fingers, and pressed forward in place of the hesitating Irishmen with menaces in every form of broken English. One of the desperadoes—a black-visaged giant with a broken nose—threw off all disguise. “Time is up,” he growled. “If you don’t come, by God, there’s a hundred thousand men outside will come and fetch you out with brickbats.” And the roar of the assembling multitude in the streets set the threat to a macabresque music not pleasant to listen to. “That sort of talk,” I suggested, “had not very much effect in Canada.” “Don’t you mind them Eye-talian rubbish, Mr. O’Brien,” put in the Lieutenant of Police of the Precinct (an Irishman named Sullivan), who had his battalion below to escort me to the platform. “If you don’t want to go, say the word, and all the hoodlums in the Tenderloin won’t hurt a bone in your body. I’m from Tipperary!”

The meeting in Union Square was as extraordinary a study as any in history of the vicissitudes of popular emotion. It was generally agreed that a hundred thousand men was not an excessive estimate of the number present. The masses heard but little of what was passing in the immediate neighbourhood of

the platform. They stood aloof in a state of stupefaction. But in the organised circle around the official speakers the rage over my supposed betrayal of the Labour Cause to the capitalists burst all bounds. Father McGlynn became the avenging angel of the night. A monster harp of roses, eight feet high, which was to have been presented to the absentee, was presented instead to Father McGlynn, who anathematised me in at least as vigorous terms as any he complained of in the decrees of his ecclesiastical persecutors. Mr. Henry George indulged his temper at the expense of his discretion by sending a letter in which he bluntly confessed the hollowness of the pretext on which the welcome to the Canadian envoys was organised.

"I cannot," he wrote, "join in denouncing any Irish landlord for doing what the laws of his country give him a perfect right to do, and I'm too staunch an upholder of the sacred rights of property to justify the putting of any coercion upon a landlord as to the terms and conditions on which he shall allow others to use what is still admitted to be his."

All which would be brave enough, if penned before his political managers arranged to turn the Canadian boom to their own uses, but, as matters stood, proved no wiser than the taunt: "The English burn like coal, the Irish like chips," with which he avenged the defeat of a former attempt of his to make the vile body of Ireland the subject on which to try his experiment of Nationalisation. The night's proceedings doubtless cost Henry George the defeat at the polls in New York which was his last essay in public life. After much polyglot denunciation the tragi-comedy wound up by clapping a pair of spectacles on an effigy modelled to represent Lord Lansdowne, and with that slight retouching to indicate its metempsychosis into myself, it was given to the flames amidst the execrations of tens of thousands of honest citizens, knowing not in the least what they did.

We were face to face with one very real danger to the Irish Cause--the threat repeated again and again by the speakers at Union Square that neither we nor any member of the Party for which we spoke would ever again be allowed to step on a platform in America unless and until we had first done public penance. The menace was not a negligible one which was put forth with all the strength of militant Socialism at a moment when few of the timorous classes doubted its approaching triumph. What were the chances of stemming the tide within the forty-eight hours that remained before our departure? There was still time to catch the Sunday papers with some answer to the torrents of mad vituperation from Union Square with which they were sure to be inundated. Towards midnight, in a room crowded with gloomy counsellors returning from the meeting, I set to work upon an "interview" directed wholly to the intelligence of men of Irish blood, telling the plain story of what had happened, and depicting the ruin which must have fallen upon sorely-bested Ireland and her leader had we taken any other course. The kernel of our defence was really this:

"The condition of our accepting any favour from any American organisation, of whatever party or colour, was that their action should be directed solely to the service of the Irish Cause, and should in no manner increase the difficulties, already sufficiently cruel, of our people by embroiling us in American issues, and so estranging the sympathy of the American nation in its integrity, which is one of the sheet anchors of our cause."

The effect upon the general public was instantaneous. The New York papers, without a solitary exception, condemned the double dealing of the Henry George people, and applauded our answer. The *Times*, which stood alone among the New York dailies in hostility to the Mission to Canada, now

vied with the foremost to bear witness that: "it has fallen to the lot of this British subject to teach our native statesmen and politicians a sorely-needed lesson and to set an example of courage and self-respect which is well-worthy of their imitation." Our rooms were all day thronged with prominent Nationalists, jubilant at the proof that the Irish movement was not to be wagged by the Socialist tail, and with telegraph messengers laden with messages from every part of the United States which could scarcely have been more fervid if some resounding victory had been won on the field. Even within the Socialists' ranks the reaction was making itself felt. The founder of the Central Labour Union, Mr. Robert Blissert, called to express his own disgust at the Union Square ambushade, and the Irish officials of the Union, Mr. McQuaid, the secretary, and Mr. Casserly, the treasurer, on the same day handed in their resignations. The New York Press Club made us the heroes of a reception in which journalists of the rank of Charles A. Dana of *The Sun*, Colonel Cochrane of the *World*, and the humorist then most relished on the American Continent, "Bill Nye," played the principal parts.

With moderate opinion the success surpassed belief. Had the miracle also touched the souls of the hundred thousand workers who had come to bless and remained to curse in Union Square? For if they, speaking for Labour, were lost, all was lost. Who could answer for the working of the popular passions played upon by subterranean societies of foreign revolutionists and dynamiters, of unknown strength? It was brought to a test on the night of our departure. We were banquetted at the Hoffman House by a couple of hundred hosts through whom every element of power in New York, with the exception of the Labour Union—its Congressional and Municipal politics, its journalism, its judiciary,

its wealth—spoke with an authenticity there could be no disputing. As we sat down a cablegram of auspicious omen was put into my hands. It was from Parnell, and contained only the two words: "Well done." For one whose own crystal clear notion of his duty in the emergency did not release him from forebodings, the message was worth more than the applause of a continent of strangers. Of the evening's oratory, two or three points deserve to be retained, if only to illustrate the grotesqueness of English hallucinations in dealing with the affairs of Ireland. One of the first toasts was "Gladstone," and it can most truly be written that the name and the message of peace of the great Englishman conquered the hearts of the assembly with a completeness which no other name except that of Parnell could command. And magnanimity like this, be it remembered, while the newspapers were full of the activities of the English Parliament in trampling down all opposition to a new measure of ferocious Coercion for Ireland, and in setting up a tribunal to assassinate the Irish leader with the foulest weapons of calumny and forgery. If the passionate Irish-American yearnings of that night for peace with England have long given place to a resentment no less passionate, let the most self-complacent of English politicians question his conscience well where the reproach lies! Another of the absurdities which passed for gospel truth with millions of guileless Englishmen was that Parnell and his movement were the slaves and the stipendiaries of the American dynamiters. One of the incidents of the Hoffman House banquet was the presentation to me of a cheque for 25,000 dollars from the Treasurer of the Irish Parliamentary Fund to be disposed of for any purpose Parnell pleased, and the Treasurer was Eugene Kelly, a banker of repute, and the presentation was made on a night when it was doubtful whether the crowd assembling in the

Fifth Avenue outside might not be the dynamiters burning for their revenge for my repudiation of Mr. McMickan. One other reminiscence is worth recording. Mr. Grace, Mayor of New York, who presided, mentioned to me during dinner time that as a boy he ran away from his home in Kilkenny with only a half-crown in his pocket. He mentioned also that he had the previous day signed, with the gesture of one of the great Powers, a cheque for (I think) £12,000,000 in payment for the purchase of the entire railway system of the Republic of Peru. Of such men were the Irish irreconcilables and assassins, whose outstretched hand England rejected with a blow.

The Henry George people might still say : " that is all very well as to the gold-bugs ; wait until the proletariat come on the scene." There was not long to wait. While the eloquent Bishop of Trenton, New Jersey (Dr. O'Farrell) was still speaking to the last toast, the sounds of music, and the hoarse murmur of voices and feet which came up to us from Fifth Avenue, announced that the proletariat were already in motion. Did the noise of many waters portend a prospering tide or breakers for our destruction ? It would be childish to deny that the uncertainty what might be the answer made elderly faces around the tables, and I doubt not my own, a little pale. When my name began to be shouted from the street, a few urged me to go forward, the rest hesitated and looked grave. As, however, we must presently leave for the boat, there was no possibility of shirking the test. As a window was thrown open, and my eye lighted upon the tumultuous sea of faces that agitated the immense space underneath, it seemed an even chance whether the next moment was to bring victory or a shower of brickbats. What the next moment did bring was a roar of frantic enthusiasm without one audible voice of dissent in the city,

and, it cannot be doubted, largely from the same men who two nights before had heard me condemned to an apparently irretrievable perdition. The few sentences of thanks I was able to shout from the balcony were received with transports, which in the case of an American crowd, usually self-restrained to the verge of coldness, bespoke the extraordinary intensity of the re-action. The two miles' march to the berth of the White Star liner, *Adriatic*, escorted by three thousand soldiers of the Sixty-Ninth, the most famous Irish regiment of the Civil War, was one unbroken scene of impassioned affection—the word is not too strong—which might well have seemed extravagant if it was not three-fourths due, as in the case of Canada, to indignation at the blunderheaded unfairness of our assailants. If at first sight the suddenness of the transformation scene from Union Square to the Fifth Avenue might seem to the cynical a new warning that he who depends upon the favour of the many-headed multitude swims with fins of lead, it was for men of a larger hope a reassurance of the solid foundations of democratic government, since the puzzled people had only to get a fair chance of searching out the truth for themselves in order to forget even their class prejudices to make generous amends for their first uninformed injustice.

CHAPTER XVIII

“ REMEMBER MITCHELSTOWN ”

(1887)

Our landing in Ireland was marked by one of those episodes which are more fatal to England's pretensions in Ireland than would be the loss of pitched battles. As we disembarked on the quay at Queens-town in the grey dawn, a regiment of Tipperary Militia (the 18th Royal Irish) had just been landed also from Spike Island where they had been in training. The moment we were recognised, the entire regiment of red coats broke their ranks to rush around us, waving their rifles about their heads, and more than half the audience we addressed at that uncanny hour was composed of soldiers “ in England's hated red,” shouting their wild Tipperary whoops. The rest of the day passed in mad festivities in the city of Cork following the ceremony of conferring the Freedom of the City, and the next day was spent in the most extraordinary series of glorified agonies it has ever been my lot to undergo in one day—a succession of quite frenzied welcomes home at every one of the twenty-three stations stopped at by the slow Sunday train to Dublin, culminating in a tumultuary progress to “ The Impayrial,” consecrated by a sacramental something of which military conquerors for all their feathers and salutes of big guns, never quite partake the secret. The Freedom of the City of Dublin was an appropriate last word of the welcome home.

It was all very moving and very terrifying. The country was, I suppose, stirred to the core by the human spectacle of perils in an uneven battle wondrously overpassed, and by the growing conviction that the same carelessness of consequences, akin to desperation, was the only hope of safety in the new perils with which the Perpetual Coercion Act just passed into law menaced her existence. Parnell's Paladins had never figured to more advantage than in their resistance to this infamous measure. In any work purporting to be a history of the movement as a whole, a chapter might be richly filled with the record of the eloquence, daring and resource devoted to the losing battle by Mr. Dillon, Mr. Healy, Mr. Sexton, Mr. T. P. O'Connor and others. For almost the last time the Party appeared on the Westminster scene in the plenitude of their power and comradeship, each supplementing the others—this one with fiery passion, this other with Swift's biting irony, still another with an intellectual agility that mocked at the most ruthless fetters of debate—in encounters which were the pride of their race, and extorted cheers from the ranks of the Tories even as they stabbed. And that though they were depressed by the absence of Parnell, upon whom the attacks of Bright's disease had returned, and who could only intervene once or twice in the debates, although always with the effect of an Homeric demigod descending from Olympus. But the results were of a character to show that the old methods of Parliamentary obstruction had passed away. Discussion was cut short by a closure which destroyed the old Parliamentary institutions of England more brutally than Cromwell's armed raid. At a given hour on a given night, the guillotine fell, whole groups of clauses enabling the Government to suppress the people's organisations by a stroke of the pen and try men by specially packed juries or without any

jury at all, as they pleased, were hustled through Committee without a word of discussion, and nothing better was left to the Opposition, Liberal and Irish, to avenge their expiring liberties than to quit the chamber. Finally English misgovernment presented its most hateful face when the Forged Letters were printed by the *Times* in collusion with the smug Leader of the House, Mr. W. H. Smith, in order to render the smallest resistance to the Coercion Act odious in England; and Parnell's own exposure of the Forgeries which afterwards horrified all civilized men, was received with jeers and laughter by the triumphant Unionists.

Westminster might still be the vantage ground from which to fire an effective shot for Ireland, but the ammunition could only come from Ireland herself. The new Chief Secretary was going over with the powers of a Tsar, and with the unconcealed determination to use them ruthlessly. Every man who stood up against him was to be struck down with whatever weapon promised to be most deadly. Every official who executed his decrees was to be defended and rewarded on a scale rising with the unscrupulousness of his deeds. There was but one answer, if Ireland's claims were not to be ingloriously given up. It was to meet Mr. Balfour with a will-power as steel-clad as his own; to respond to his every act of tyranny by redoubling the people's resistance, and never measuring the sacrifices that might be required to prove he was dealing with a nation that might be tortured till all the world cried out, but could not be conquered. Nor was this policy of Thorough so forlorn as it might seem. We had won the unquestioning allegiance of the English Party, whose ministries had often failed, but its programme never, and of an English leader of a moral value which made his party count twice over. Never was Mr. Morley less happy as a prophet or even as an observer

than in his dictum that "in England the effect" (of the Plan of Campaign) "is wholly bad ; it offends almost more even than outrages." True, it did offend men in England, "almost more than outrages," but the offended were the enemies of Ireland, who laid their last stake on Coercion, and whose disgust knew no bounds to find that Ireland's resistance was accompanied with a crimelessness which deprived governmental brutality of every rag of excuse in the eyes of Englishmen. Gladstone saw deeper into human realities, when, reserving his liberty of appreciation of the technical illegality of the Plan, the Old Parliamentary Hand sagaciously limited himself in practice to the query: "The question is rather how much disapproval?" The "how much" turned out to be just a peppercorn.

As a matter of fact, most even of the purists or chicken-hearts of the Liberal Party, and all their men of action were already won over to the conviction that in substance and in truth, the Plan of Campaign had an irresistibly just case, both against the exterminating landlords and against their savage Unionist abettors, and that moreover the plain-spoken British commonalty were rapidly coming to the same conclusion. Dozens of the best men and women in the upper and in the humbler stratum of Liberalism were every week pouring across to Ireland, seeing for themselves the barbarisms and sheer villainy of the Glenbeigh and the Bodyke evictions, and ready to attest their sincerity by throwing their own bodies across Mr. Balfour's car of Juggernaut. Their names still sparkle like stars in Irish memory—Members of Parliament like Shaw Lefevre (now Lord Eversley), Brunner, John Ellis, Joshua Rowntree, Labouchere, Schwann, Philip Stanhope (now Lord Weardale), Conybeare, Rowlands—women who were the pioneers of all that women have since done to humanize public life: Lady Sandhurst, Lady Byles, Miss Amy Mander,

Lady Winifred Robinson, Miss Norma Borthwick, Miss Cobden, Lady Anne Blunt, Mrs. Rae, Miss Skeffington Thompson, Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Holiday—publicists of far reaching power in the world of democratic thought like W. T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, W. P. Byles (afterwards Sir William Byles) of the *Bradford Observer*, and John McDonald of the *Daily News*—poets and idealists like Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Their reports of their experiences in Ireland enkindled such a reaction among the British masses that Liberal partisans were beginning to look out for bye-elections with eagerness and the Unionist Party managers with dismay. The more Mr. Balfour's logical ferocity was met with a no less logical resistance at all costs, the sooner England would be compelled to decide between the alternatives of government by consent or government by sheer savagery. If the decision went against us, there would be nothing for it but to abandon the last hope of reconciliation between the two islands and trust to the immortal purpose of a race that thinks in centuries to assert itself in some distance far away. But the omens were, on the contrary, all pointing to the certainty of a complete turning of the tables at the General Election, if a busy and materialised British public were in the meantime kept alive to the lesson that the coercion of Ireland "to amuse Arthur Balfour" (it was Lord Salisbury's own phrase) could bring nothing but shame to its ministers and pain to all men with the instincts of liberty and humanity. Hence the resolution not to shrink in presence of any excess of misgovernment, but on the contrary to go out to meet it. As it was Mr. Balfour's wise plan to single out the ringleaders for his first victims in the belief that to dispose of them was to dispose of their followers so the ringleaders of set purpose closed with his challenge with the confidence that their being the first to tread the path of suffering and foul treatment

would be the surest of all ways of engaging their nation to follow.

The writer had the honour of being selected for Mr. Balfour's first prosecution under the new Coercion Act. That Act, as we have seen, was accompanied by a Land Act conceding the relief sought by the Plan of Campaign, but administered with the statesmanlike design of wreaking vengeance on the men who had won the concession for their brother tenants. Upon the Countess of Kingston's estate, at Mitchelstown, the new Act had only to be allowed to operate to decree compulsorily the abatement of the judicial rents at the figure at which the tenants proffered payment. The leaseholders whom it admitted to the Fair Rent Courts must have secured there (as, in fact, afterwards happened) abatements considerably in excess of those demanded under the Plan of Campaign. But those who had induced Lord Salisbury to recant the vows to regard the Judicial Rents as inviolable with which his Land Act was first prefaced had committed the unforgivable sin. The first stroke of statesmanship of the new Chief Secretary was to hurry up the eviction campaign on the Mitchelstown estate before the Relief Act should come into action. The redoubtable Captain Plunkett, whom Sir M. H. Beach had employed a few months before, with Sir Redvers Buller, in forbidding evictions by the practical refusal of the forces of the Crown to the evictors, was now ordered to Mitchelstown with all his bayonets to precipitate the eviction of the men whom the Act must otherwise save, and of the justice of whose claims the Act was an official attestation. Against this iniquity I went down to protest in a speech which put an end to the evictions, but no doubt violated the letter of the existing law in the process, by exhorting the tenants straightly to resist the evictors by force pending the relief the new law must

in a few days bring them. The Northwich election was on the point of coming off. A determined stand now would knit the issue, whether there was to be any hope from England. That my exhortation would not be unavailing, was made sufficiently plain by the grim preparations for the defence visible that day in the centre of the town of Mitchelstown itself, where one of the principal business houses, that of Mr. Maurice Sullivan (afterwards famed as "Campaign House") was prepared for action, the doors front and rear barricaded, the window-frames removed, a garrison of strapping men posted in readiness inside, and across the front a great green streamer bearing the inscription: "Evictors, come on!" In the feverheat of the moment to proceed with the evictions would without any doubt have been to provoke one bloody encounter after another, all over the estate. Fortunately, Captain Plunkett, the author of the official watchword of the new policy—"Don't hesitate to shoot"—hesitated to evict: The evicting force evacuated Mitchelstown the next morning; the Government was beaten at the Northwich election; the estate was saved, and its stalwart people are now the proprietors of their own holdings under the Purchase Act of 1903, and the thud of the crowbar of the evicting brigade will never jar upon the peace of their golden plains again.¹

¹The point was put thus in the writer's "Here-we-are-now-face-to-face" speech in the House of Commons:

"On my own responsibility, in the open square and in the presence of the police, I did tell the people that, if the evictions were carried out before the Land Bill, which was within two days of being law, could become law, it would not be a vindication of the law, but an outrageous evasion of the law, and they would before all civilised men be justified in defending their homes by every honest effort in their power. . . . I have no doubt it was technically illegal for me to save the people, and that it was still legal for the landlord for two days more to ruin them. I dare say it would be a breach of the law to hold the arm of the executioner,

With an inaccuracy unusual in his fine narrative Mr. Morley (*Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III., p. 380) states that the incidents which made Gladstone cry out: "Remember Mitchelstown," were "not connected with the Crimes Act." They were, on the contrary, the direct result of the first prosecution under the Crimes Act. John Mandeville and myself were summoned to appear before the first of the new Crimes Act Courts on the 9th of September for the speeches which averted the evictions. With a view to avoiding the scenes attending the conveyance of prisoners through the country, the Act gave traversers the option of attending on simple summons in the first instance. In conformity with our settled purpose of obstructing the Act at every stage, by every means by which inconvenience, odium, derision and contempt could be heaped upon its administrators, it was decided that I should decline to facilitate the prosecution, and should disobey the summons to make a voluntary appearance. I announced my intention at a lecture for a charitable object which I delivered in Dublin on the night (8th September) before the Court was to sit in Mitchelstown. The Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, who was in the Chair, had just made a proposal for a joint treaty of peace between landlords and tenants, such as was eventually arrived at by the Land Conference of 1903, after sixteen further years of undiluted misery for both sides. The subject of the lecture, "The Lost Opportunities of the Irish Gentry," seemed to announce some final vow of irreconcilability against the class at whose instigation the morrow's prosecution was being instituted, and the country launched into a new era of clearances and dragonnades; and the fiercer the vow the more madly even if you knew and he knew that a reprieve was actually arriving at the gates. That was precisely the case of these people. A reprieve was coming and the reprieve has come."

that audience would have re-echoed it. How far the expectation was disappointed may be judged by an extract or two from the lecture : " Your Grace has quite correctly anticipated that I intend to speak only of the opportunities the Irish gentry have lost, and madly lost, in the past, and that I do not speak—I shall not say even that I despair—of the opportunities that may yet be within their grasp. The hour is never too late for Irish forgiveness—even for the class whose hands, I am sorry to say, are to this hour red with evictions and whose voices are still hoarse with the clamour for coercion."

Again (and it is curious to remark this was in the hearing of Mr. Dillon) : " If in the morning the Irish gentry proposed frankly to draw a wet sponge over the past, there is not a prominent politician in Ireland who would answer with a churlish or contumelious word. They would be welcomed. They would be honoured. Irish forgiveness is to be had to this hour for the honest asking. . . . There will be false gods no more in Ireland, but for good men and capable men who have a heart for the miseries of their countrymen and the will to labour for their alleviation, there is still, and there will always be, welcome, honour and gratitude, no matter what their class, or from what race they may have sprung."

It is, perhaps, pardonable to recall that on the night of all the nights of his life when his heart might have been most full of bitterness for the Irish minority, the speaker of that night proclaimed to their full extent, and to the most red-hot of Nationalist audiences, those principles of Conference, Conciliation and Consent, which half a generation afterwards he braved the hard words, and the subterranean workings of disappointed politicians in order to bring to their fruition in the Act which abolished Landlordism, and which might have been the sure

forerunner of an Act abolishing alien rule with the same universal good will.¹

But the hour was not yet for anything save the clash of arms. The next evening in the dining room of the Imperial Hotel, Charles Lawlor, the proprietor (fondest of friends under the mask of the most genial of cynics) put into my hands the *Evening Mail* announcing that the sitting of the Court at Mitchelstown had been signalled by a desperate encounter in the streets ending in a murderous fusillade by Captain Plunkett's police. The people could not be dissuaded from flocking into the town in thousands to enjoy the chagrin of the Coercion Court at the collapse of their day's arrangements. Their meeting on the Square, attended by a number of English Members of Parliament and Englishwomen, was burst in upon by armed policemen, under pretence of protecting a police notetaker, for whom accommodation could readily have been obtained by less aggressive methods. The interrupters were without violence pressed back to the edge of the crowd and the speaking proceeded. Suddenly, a solid phalanx of policemen with truncheons and carbines rushed from the police barrack at the bottom of the Square, and wedged themselves right into the heart of the meeting, flourishing their clubs and the butts of their guns about their heads. This was too much for mountaineers from the Galtees not accustomed to take aggression with meekness. The blows of the batons and the clubbed carbines were returned with blackthorn sticks and stones, and in a twinkling the broken ranks of the assailants were flying back down the Square to their barracks in a highly disgraceful state of panic. The evidence of

¹ Those who care to investigate for themselves how the Policy of Conciliation of 1903 was thwarted, and with it the most hopeful of all opportunities for a peaceful Irish settlement, will find the facts set forth in *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, by William O'Brien (London : Macmillan).

Mr. Dillon, who acted with coolness and gallantry throughout the proceedings, made it clear that the bulk of the meeting remained where they were, and that the irresponsible stragglers who pursued the flying policemen were few in number and never dreamed of attacking a barrack garrisoned by thrice their number of armed men. Only one of the policemen was seriously injured ; there was no pretence of proof of any actual assault upon the barracks ; two of the three civilians who lost their lives were shot while they were standing far away on the Square, where the policemen had to thrust their shoulders through the windows and aim sideways in order to reach them. This mythical invasion of the barracks was, however, the only official excuse that could be invented for the demoralised mob of policemen who, in blind terror and panic, fled to their fortress helter-skelter, and when no attack came rushed to the windows, and twisting their rifles so as to reach the Square, since assailants in the neighbourhood of the barracks there were none, slaughtered three men by way of vengeance for their own cowardly behaviour. Mr. Balfour's attitude to the assassins tells the whole story of his theory of " firm and resolute government." A transaction in reference to which the Coroner's jury returned verdicts of wilful murder against five police officers after a prolonged public inquiry was dismissed by the Chief Secretary in the House of Commons three nights afterwards, when it was not possible for him to have sifted the evidence for himself, with the verdict that the police were in no way to blame, and the responsibility lay with those who exercised the right of public meeting. The three murders remained unpunished. The only inquiry even Gladstone's scathing denunciations could succeed in getting the Chief Secretary to institute was a secret police investigation into their responsibilities, not for the murders, but for the untimely

panic of the police—not for their over-zeal, but for their want of zeal sufficiently prompt to interpret their commission: “Don’t hesitate to shoot.” It was brutality, but frank brutality, and it was logic, and Mr. Balfour was to be thanked once more for leaving Englishmen in no doubt what their rule in Ireland must in the nature of things be.

Three nights after the massacre at Mitchelstown, when I went down to Kingstown to see Labouchere and Brunner off by the mailboat, the warrant for my arrest was executed by Superintendent Reddy, under the belief, in which the Castle was as absurdly astray as usual, that I intended to join them in debating the event in the House of Commons the following evening. In pursuance of the plan of countering the Coercionists at every step with obstruction, discomfort, and contempt, I refused to fall in with the official arrangement for lodging me in Dublin Castle for the night, without a physical resistance which would have raised half Dublin into an uproar, and declined to make any terms with my captors when they proposed to make me promise not to make any public speech on condition of taking me to the Imperial Hotel instead. The unfortunate Superintendent saw with dismay the great street in front filling with people as the rumour of the arrest went around, but was powerless to interfere while his prisoner stepped out on the balcony to harangue the multitude, and in the citadel of the Chief Secretary’s power made the welkin ring alternately with execrations and derision of the despotism of which the Mitchelstown murders were the overture. It was a war *par petits paquets*, but it was the only one possible for a disarmed people struggling with a power to all appearance as overwhelming as it was ignorant and cruel, but it established from that night a standard of unbending resistance in great things or small, at every hour and in every corner of the country as opportunity offered

—*nunc, olim, quocunque dabunt se tempore vires*—which the history of the next three years proved, was not to be vanquished by any force of Statutable cruelty or of gunfire. The scene was repeated the next day at every stage of our progress through the South. By the time the portals of Cork jail closed upon the prisoner, amidst a final shower of not-to-be-reasoned-with paving stones for the escorting troop of dragoons, one knew that in Mr. Balfour's quaint confidence that his battle was already won, when he set out to terrify or stamp out three or four leaders, he had in reality set fire to a nation.

The scenes attending the formal reading over of the sentences dictated by Dublin Castle—for that was, of course, the plain English of the "trial" of John Mandeville and myself before the Removable Magistrates at Mitchelstown on September 24th—may be best described in a few extracts from the Diary of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.¹ Mr. Blunt had come over under an irresistible impulse of duty to see for himself how Mr. Balfour was going to give effect to his intentions revealed to him in the conversations at Clouds in the first week of September that half a dozen men named "must be got out of the way," and that "we are not going to have any nonsense such as there was in Forster's time" as to any consideration for his prisoners. He was blamed without mercy in his own aristocratic world for thinking more of the lives of men, and of the fate of a defenceless people, than of his obligation to suppress the "confidential" conversation with a responsible Minister of the Crown in which this mode of warfare was divulged. Nobody seriously contested the good faith or the substantial accuracy of the revelation, which was, indeed, attested by the whole course of philosophic inhumanity pursued by the Chief Secretary in the

¹ *The Land War in Ireland*. London : Swift and Co., 1912.

next few years, and not least in the prison treatment of Mr. Blunt himself. It is bare justice to a high-minded English gentleman to acknowledge that if the project thus lightly entered upon did not produce many more tragedies, and was finally dropped under the pressure of a violent reaction in Britain, the credit is largely due to the fortitude with which Mr. Blunt brought the truth of the Government's designs into the daylight, and with which he supported their rigours in his own person. The historian of these times will find his book a storehouse of information rarely to be found as to the inner events and the personages of the last of the Irish Land Wars, and his evidence is all the more precious that his judgments are recorded with a candour which may sometimes be awkward for his friends, but invariably bears the stamp of sincerity and truth. A few of his Mitchelstown notes may still be read with the morning freshness of impressions committed to paper at the moment.

First, this characteristic incident (surely one only possible in Ireland) of Bridewell life in Mitchelstown:

“ *September 23rd.* The last joke is that Mandeville and the prisoners in the Bridewell got hobnobbing last night with their jailor, who was so inspired by patriotism and whiskey that he threw them the keys of their dungeon and they availed themselves of his generosity to the extent of going out for a couple of hours' leave, returning to prison later so as not to compromise their friend. Dillon assures me it would be quite possible to get O'Brien out of nearly any prison in Ireland, for the turnkeys are generally their partisans in secret and O'Brien is universally beloved.

“ *September 24th.* The day of O'Brien's trial: the town is held by a battalion of the Guards, a troop of dragoons, and some fifty constables. Some eight

thousand men (not women or children) came in from the country round, but without banners or music. At ten we called on the minor prisoners at the Bridewell, and then walked on along the road to the cross-ways, where we waited O'Brien's arrival (from Cork jail). Here he presently appeared, escorted by a troop of dragoons and a number of pressmen in cars, and a deputation from Cork with a green banner. A single dragoon rode in front, but seeing our party in the road fell back upon the main body, apparently fearing an ambushade. Then they swept by in a cloud of dust through our cheers. O'Brien, arrived at the Courthouse, was a spectacle for Heaven, powdered with dust from head to foot! He was in high spirits all the same, and we were able to shake hands with him and wish him luck, and the ladies to present him with flowers. The Square was occupied by the Guards in their scarlet uniforms and shakos drawn up across each opening. . . . The proceedings of the trial were very interesting, both from the composition of the court—it was as much a packed tribunal as any in the Stuart days—as from the absurd nature of the evidence, got up by Captain Plunkett (a swaggering, loud-voiced fellow in a check suit) who also appointed the magistrates. . . .

“*September 25th.* We went early to the Bridewell to see O'Brien, whom we found in the highest possible spirits. He and his fellow prisoners had spent a merry evening singing patriotic songs, and his description of the jailor coming in to caution them was very amusing. ‘Gentlemen,’ the jailor said, ‘I don’t wish to interfere with your diversions, but I would remark that there is an echo (or as Luke pronounced it, ‘ay-cho’) in this place and I’m afraid you’ll be heard in the street (by them bloody Bobbies outside)’ . . . We then went on to the Courthouse and heard the trial out. Harrington having thrown down his brief, O'Brien was his own lawyer to-day,

and made a very vigorous defence. He has two tones in his voice, one low, soft and very touching, the other strident and declamatory. He began in the first, and standing before his judges he was the ideal of a martyr speaking to an unjust tribunal. His declamatory harangue which followed I liked less, and yet it, too, was very powerful.¹ Dillon sat next to him to advise, and on the other side sat the Dean (O'Regan) a white-haired old priest of the Douay school. It ended just as Harrington had all

¹ It may not be uninteresting to others, as it is assuredly interesting to myself, to add here two other descriptions of my peculiarities as a speech-maker. They are none the less valuable pieces of expert evidence because they come from brother pressmen of distinction. The first is from the *Recollections of an Irish Judge*, by M. McDonnell Bodkin, K.C. (page 149): "When I first met him on the *Freeman's Journal* staff he gave me the idea of being a student rather than an orator or agitator. He had a rooted repugnance to public speaking. . . . He was afterwards to become the greatest platform speaker of his day, the greatest that Ireland has known since O'Connell, an orator whose words could inspire his audience with an enthusiasm almost amounting to frenzy. . . . His fiery earnestness carried all before it. Absolutely fearless, he was ready for any sacrifice, and when he led all were prepared to follow, doubts and fears forgotten." The other is from *The Home Rule Movement*, by Mr. Michael MacDonagh, the author of the *Life of O'Connell*, which has now become a standard authority (page 171): "Lord Salisbury had declared that the true physic for Ireland's mind disease was 'twenty years of resolute government'; and that he had found the man to carry out that policy as Chief Secretary in his nephew, Arthur James Balfour. Ireland also found her man. . . .

"The man whom Ireland found in this emergency was that very remarkable personality, William O'Brien. He inspired and directed the Irish Nationalist Movements, agrarian and political, for the four stirring years, 1886-1890. He was acknowledged leader because of his ability, his passionate earnestness, his soaring faith in his cause. . . . O'Brien achieved greatness because he dared without any thought of the risk involved to himself. He dared, when in the early eighties during a strike of the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, he planned to electrify the people and stupefy the Government by taking Dublin Castle by force of arms, himself leading the Fenians in the attack, with the object of carrying off the Viceroy, Lord Spencer, as a hostage

along predicted, in a sentence of three months imprisonment. Eaton, the chief magistrate, denied that he read the sentence, but I was just behind him and saw the paper he was reading."

Curiously enough Mr. Blunt failed to notice at all the Crown Prosecutor, Mr. Edward Carson, whom I then saw for the first time, but was destined to encounter in many an eventful hour to come. Who, indeed, could discern in the liverish young man, with the complexion of one fed on vinegar, and with

to the mountains. . . . He dared just as much years afterwards when, as he thought, the hour auspicious for reconciliation having come, he promptly held out the olive branch to the landlords, and brought about a conference which led to the great land purchase scheme, and was within an ace of settling the national question also, had not the evil genius of the country—working this time mainly through political short-sightedness and perhaps political jealousies of other leading nationalists—brought his policy of 'Conference, Conciliation, and Consent' to ruin. . . .

"William O'Brien was thirty-four years of age, when in the winter of 1886, in answer to the pronouncement of the first Unionist Government that they would stand no nonsense from Ireland, he started the Plan of Campaign. . . . In the working of the Plan, O'Brien had John Dillon as his chief comrade-in-arms in Ireland, and T. M. Healy and Sexton as his chief lieutenants in the House of Commons. . . . O'Brien was a man of considerable nervous and spiritual force. For rousing popular passion at a public meeting he was greatest among the Irish leaders. He swayed the crowd as the trees of a wood are swayed by the storm. He was alternately menacing, mournful, prophetic, gentle, and appealing. As he spoke he trembled from head to foot, and panted under the stress of his oratorical outburst. He indulged in the wildest of gestures, face, hands, and arms, and the tones of his voice ranged from a piercing shriek when he was scornful and denunciatory, to a soft, murmurous whisper when he indulged in passages of tender pathos and the dreamy musings of his poetic imagination. I remember well, as a reporter for *The Freeman's Journal*, attending Plan of Campaign meetings, how difficult I found it to transfer his passion, invective, and imagery through the hieroglyphics of shorthand to my note-book, so attracted was I by the magnetic nature of the man, and so great was the whirl into which the sweep and sway of his eloquence put my mind."

This last is the prettiest compliment the heart of an old newspaper man could desire.

features as inexpressive as a jagged hatchet, other than the latest of the Dublin lawyers who in every fresh bout of Coercion swoop on their quarry by the instincts of vultures scenting a battlefield? Mr. Carson was at the time little known outside the circle at the Library fire in the Four Courts. It was his first brief in Munster, and he had probably never set foot in the Ulster of which he was to constitute himself the fanatical disturber. His sinister features, which were somewhat of a libel on the real man, at once gave him an exaggerated unpopularity which made his fame as one of the triumvirate who undertook to dragoon Ireland. Of them it might be said, as it was of the three revolutionary confederates of the French Terror, that whatever the three undertook, Balfour thought it, Carson said it, and Plunkett did it. The only one of his later qualities of which the young barrister gave any glimpse at Mitchelstown was the cold insolence which he was to tone down in larger days—the traditional truculence in word and manners which made the Irish Crown Prosecutor all but as unlovely a portion of the machinery of justice as the hangman. The one comment with which he dismissed my own poor defence was: “The usual blather!” Since a battle unto blood it was to be, I was only too well content that the principal officer of Public Justice should make a parade of so refreshing a gift of making himself and his cause odious. Much more inexcusable, because less valiant, was his contemptuous reference to my brother prisoner, John Mandeville, as some obscure village agitator, seeking notoriety by holding on to my coat tails—the man thus stupidly insulted being a gentleman freeholder with no selfish interest of any kind in the Land War, who lived in a delightful home with his devoted wife, who enjoyed a respect so universal in the community, that the very Bridewell keeper addressed him as “Master John,” and who

was to lay down his life without a complaining word as a consequence of the sentence thus unhappily bespoken for him. It was, possibly, some haunting memories like these that, when I met Sir Edward Carson many a year later at a moment when, but for a stroke of Ireland's historic ill-luck, our old quarrel might have been closed for ever, caused him to remark: "You are the most forgiving man I ever met." My half-bantering, whole-earnest, response was: "Don't give me the slightest credit for it. You forget you were a much more useful man than myself in making England's rule detestable." There were only two breaks in his impassiveness at the Mitchelstown trial. One was his very perceptible annoyance, when I was leaving Court on the first evening, to see the Guards, lined at each side as I passed, hoist their shakos on the tops of their rifles and burst into cheers for their prisoner. The other was his almost too acid contempt for the hooting with which he was received himself by the populace. I have seen that yellow smile and demonstrative lower lip displayed to more advantage often enough since, before a hostile majority in the House of Commons, when he had no omnipotent Coercion Act at his back to cheapen the valour of his contempt.

The month between the sentence and its confirmation on appeal must be skipped over, crammed though it was with events stirring enough, such as three new prosecutions against me in the Dublin Police Courts, in which the tables were victoriously turned by Mr. Healy; the interview of Mr. Dillon and myself with Monsignor Persico, the Papal Envoy; and a series of insuppressible "suppressed" meetings on the fighting estates, the final triumph of which was the first of the Midnight meetings, when the Lord Lieutenant's proclamation was publicly burnt in Woodford, and Mr. Wilfrid Blunt gave Mr. Balfour his revenge by a prosecution of which more hereafter.

The month was spent in winding the country up to an open and scornful defiance of Coercion in all its pitiful shapes during the three months after I should have disappeared.

Two incidents of the last scene must not be omitted. A procession several miles long accompanied John Mandeville and myself to the Appeal Court at Midleton. When the proceedings commenced a telegram was handed to the Crown Solicitor, and was long and anxiously debated between Mr. Carson and himself. One of our innumerable friends in the Telegraph Service had got hold of the Government cypher and concocted a telegram from the famous Serjeant Peter O'Brien in Dublin, instructing Mr. Carson for urgent reasons which would be duly communicated to him to have the appeal adjourned to the next Sessions—a respite of three months. It would have been an immense joke, and it is now clear the Crown Council would have fallen without suspicion into the booby-trap. I had not been apprised of the design and spoiled the fun, while Mr. Carson was still painfully interpreting the cypher, by standing up to announce that I would take no further part in the proceedings, and proposed to quit the Court pending the completion of formalities. This, I was advised, was perfectly admissible according to the wording of the Act, and so the Recorder, who presided, declared; but the Removable Magistrate in command—a burly military man named Stokes—jumped madly on the witness table flourishing a heavy oak stick about his head, shouted that he would not let me leave the Court, whatever the law or the Recorder might say, and straightway provoked a riot between the police and the people, in which I was sufficiently rejoiced with this spectacle of the Coercion bullies in open insurrection against the law to submit with an excellent grace to be dragged back before I could reach

the thousands of excited people surging around the Courthouse.

The last touch was supplied on our transfer to Cork jail by road in the midst of an escort of Hussars. We rode in a two horse carriage in the company of the County Inspector of police and one of his subalterns, and a miscellaneous cavalcade of horsemen and cars of all descriptions galloped wildly in the rear. It was only as we neared Cork that we realized that the chargers of the hussars had quickened their pace to a gallop, and that our unfortunate coach horses were being flogged to a pace never rivalled outside the pages of Lever. We noticed also that a light trap driven by the Mayor of Cork, Alderman John O'Brien, was by this time engaged in a steeplechase with our escort, and was threatening to pass us on the road at full gallop. We were not long in surmising the explanation. A couple of miles from Cork, at Dunkettle, an opening bridge spans the road, and Mayor John O'Brien was racing to be first across the swing bridge in time to lift it and leave the Hussars and their prisoners on the wrong side of a yawning gulf of waters. For the last half mile the pace became so terrific I expected every moment our unfortunate steeds would drop and die in the shafts, but at the last a charge of the rearguard brought the Mayor's gallant chase to a standstill, and the troop of Hussars was safely across the swing bridge, their horses dead beat, but themselves chortling with victory. And so on to our destination at the jail gates where, as usual, an affectionate shower of stones fired as it were Rebel Cork's last volley over the bodies of their departed comrades.

One trait more to put us in a better humour with human nature. The next day the Captain in charge of the Hussar escort called to the jail to leave his card for me, and the Governor of the jail, Major Roberts,

brought it to me with the air of one who was risking his neck—or, what was the same thing, his place—to do his prisoner the courtesy. Wonderful old land of ours! Well may the bard sing—

Here's dear old Ireland, brave old Ireland,
Ireland boys, hurrah!

CHAPTER XIX

“ TULLAMORE ”

(1887)

The struggle by which all Mr. Balfour's prison plans were finally broken and thrown to the winds was concerned only in a subsidiary degree with the personal privations of his prisoners. It was primarily resolved upon as a means of prolonging the resistance to coercion after imprisonment in a way more damaging to the Coercionists than the activity outside for which the imprisonment took place, and thus reducing the infamous penal code to a nullity as well as condemning its ministers to the reprobation of civilized men. His every official act confirmed the revelation at Clonsilla of the Chief Secretary's programme. It was to treat his political prisoners not better but worse than the most heinous of common criminals since they were better educated and their motives did not matter, and to degrade them because he believed they would feel the degradation, and to laugh away their protests with jibes and sneers, the calculation being that the chief among them being men of delicate physique, they would speedily wilt under his stings and thumbscrews, and make his political victory secure. But that was precisely the challenge on which we elected to close with him, viz.: the essential justice of our acts, and the refusal to attorn in the smallest particular to his claim that he was dealing not with the elected representatives of

a nation, but with criminals deserving rather viler treatment than the pickpocket or the wife-beater. The more injudicious the levity with which he appealed to Cæsar on that issue, the better worth while it seemed at any hazard to take him at his word.

That there might be no room for misconception, the precise particulars of how I proposed to handle Mr. Balfour's prison rules were set forth in a public interview while I was awaiting trial in Cork Jail. The mere hardships attending imprisonment—unpalatable food, the plank bed and so on—were fairly part of the *régime*, and would be cheerfully accepted. The hunger strike of after years savoured for me rather of materialism than of idealism. To ground a national protest upon the quality of the prison fare would have been in my eyes as grotesque as if the demand were for chicken and champagne, and to refuse the means of existence altogether might be open to the reproach of being a particularly indefensible form of suicide. We warred only against Mr. Balfour's wilful determination to degrade his prisoners into criminals, and that not even through motives of personal susceptibility but because the question whether he was right in his contention involved the question of the justice or guilt of our cause and must consequently decide the entire issue between the two countries. The three instruments of prison treatment which were devised to stamp the prisoners of the Coercion Act with the criminal brand were—prison garb, menial prison tasks, and enrolment in the class of common law convicts in the matter of joint exercise, servile salutes to officials and so forth. As to each of the three, I gave fair notice that I should decline to wear the prison uniform for criminals, to perform any menial office whatsoever required of criminals, or to be associated with criminals at exercise or in any other disciplinary parade. This

was undeniably to propose to break Mr. Balfour's prison rules to fragments, or to be broken—a trial of strength which was, no doubt, as little promising, if one may mention small things in the same breath with great, as the hope of Prometheus to be delivered from the tooth of the vulture on his rock of Mount Caucasus. But it seemed to me clear then, as indeed it turned out, that nothing except a failure to be as good as my word could prevent the conflict from eventuating in the paralysis of the Coercion *régime* and an overwhelming revulsion of feeling in England.

With Mr. Dillon I was at one in this as, indeed, in all else, save for his concern that the hard lot should have fallen to me. He was then, as he was for a good many years afterwards, a miracle of activity on the platform, a meticulous administrator of the Campaign funds, and, in more intimate intercourse, an even-tempered and restful friend. The Archbishop of Cashel, who summoned me to Thurles for a consultation on the subject, was divided between a keen appreciation of the political advantages and a personal anxiety—it might truly be called anguish—which took the somewhat intimidating form of bringing tears to his eyes. His Grace's final word was: "Well, I suppose it is foolishness. The wise men called the Cross foolishness, for that matter. Nobody can advise you but God!" The one disquieting counsellor was Davitt. "It is madness," he cried, with the old thunder-cloud, seldom seen since his happy marriage, settling again on his forehead. "You'll be beaten and laughed at, or you will be killed, and people will say it was your own fault. No man ever resisted prison rules that did not go down. Of all the Fenian prisoners, O'Donovan Rossa was the only one who made any resistance, and he might as well have beaten his brains out against the wall. It was years before anybody outside even heard that he had been for thirty-three days chained with his

hands behind his back and forced to lap his food like a dog." It was easy to reply that it was a very different thing for the Fenians buried in English convict prisons without a friend in broad England, but that we should have all progressive Britain, its most powerful statesman, and its Press watching every move with a vital interest in our success ; that every recent bye-election had filled the Unionists with dismay for British public opinion of their doings in Ireland : that with such a power on our side it would not be possible to bury prison tragedies out of sight ; and that even should the experiment fail as badly as he predicted, it would only be the experiment of one man who had nothing to risk except a life, and that a life not too extravagantly valued by its possessor. Davitt's objection was not to be shaken. But in truth he was a born *frondeur*, bound to be in opposition to every concrete proposal of action in hours of emergency, but, unlike the *frondeurs*, too generous not to admit his mistakes with an almost childlike simplicity as soon as his anticipations had been refuted by results. For that reason, his colleagues had come to regard their great countryman with less confidence in his advice in practical affairs than affection for his charming personality.

Wilfrid Blunt, who saw much of Davitt during his time in Ireland, reported his experiences with a disconcerting candour all his own. He found (p. 279) that Davitt "blamed as a false move" my visit to America ; which, remembering his admiration for the doctrines of Henry George, is not to be surprised at ; that when at a great meeting at the Rotunda at the moment of my Mitchelstown sentence, Mr. Blunt "urged the people not to remain quiet while O'Brien was in prison, Michael Davitt, who was sitting behind me, plucked my coat tails and warned me that I had said enough ;" (page 309), and that a few days after, Davitt told him "he was not inclined

just now to be himself the martyr, as he is going next week away from Ireland. He talked, as I thought, ungenerously of O'Brien, who, he said, had brought his arrest on his own head, and he condemned his Plan of Campaign," (p. 313).

Mr. Dillon was still more outspoken in lamenting Davitt's critical moods during these perilous years: "Of Michael Davitt, he said he was playing a foolish game just now. He had quarrelled with O'Brien and himself about the Plan of Campaign, saying that it ought to have been a campaign of No Rent. This was only because the Plan was not his own, and as a matter of fact it would have been impossible for Davitt to get anybody to go in for No Rent; the farmers would not have joined; it would have discredited Gladstone; it would have frightened people even in America; also it would have set the Pope against them at Rome. The absurdity of the thing was that in 1881 Davitt had been equally strong precisely against No Rent, when the No Rent idea was being brought forward." (p. 291).

Mr. Blunt adds that "Davitt's account, in his *Fall of Feudalism*, of his abstention from all personal part in the Plan of Campaign (viz., that it was owing to Parnell's request to him to take no part in it) is different from this (statement of Mr. Dillon) and from all Davitt himself told me at the time." What rendered his censorious temper less excusable in such a pass was that, when pressed by Mr. Blunt to say what alternative method he would recommend himself to cope with the Unionist-cum-landlord despotism in Ireland, he could only suggest that a Mr. Powderley, the head of the Knights of Labour in America, might be invited to make a speech-making tour of the country, a plan which might possibly win back the favour of Henry George's friends, but was scarcely likely to incommode Mr. Balfour in his arrangements for dragooning Ireland.

But all these small divagations were only the passing faults of temper of a man whom Parnell's veto on Nationalization of the land had left without any congenial programme of his own. The essential goodness of the man, as well as the state of health which largely accounted for his hasty criticisms, come out in an entry in Wilfrid Blunt's *Diary* hot-foot upon the entry referring to my prosecutions: "I am sorry I wrote two days ago what I did about Davitt, for although, perhaps, founded upon a certain amount of truth, I have done him injustice. After writing my letters and calling on the Lord Mayor, I went down to Ballybrack and dined with Davitt and his wife. . . . It is easy to see by the cordial intercourse of all, and their plans for William O'Brien, that there is no real want of good feeling on Davitt's part or any lack of harmony; Davitt, however, is really out of health, having had a severe attack of diarrhœa, and his sister tells me he only weighs ten stone, which, for a man of his height, shows serious evil. He will have to take a rest if he is to do work later when the troubles of the No Rent days are renewed; and Dr. Kenny recommends a voyage to Lisbon, and the Mediterranean."

There is the man in a lightning flash: the sharp word of a moment forgotten, and the sure reaction to a large-hearted generosity. Hence my not being dismayed by his discouraging advice in the ordeal before me; hence the undying popularity of his name with a race for whom, in a famous French phrase, the heart hath reasons which mere Reason knoweth not.

The test was not long in coming. When the turnkey unlocked the door of my cell the morning after my arrival, it was to lay a suit of prison clothing on the stool, with the request that I should put the plank-bed standing against the wall and clean out the cell and proceed to perform my day's task of

unravelling a hunk of hempen rope which he threw on the floor. But the demand was made in the quavering voice of one who knew what the answer would be, and the poor man's face bore such a stamp of misery that, as happened in many a conjuncture to come, I was moved to keener sympathy with my individual jailor than with myself. When, upon his report, the Governor visited the cell a few minutes after, it was with a face of still deeper gloom and, indeed, of terror which, but for the sake of the soft-hearted Cork Major himself, might have betrayed me into an irreverent laugh. "Is there no chance of your changing your mind, Mr. O'Brien?" he suggested in unsanguine tones. "It will be a mere matter of form, and you may trust to me to give you as good a time as ever you had in your life." "My dear Major," was the reply, "it was not to have a good time I came here. You and I won't fall out personally, whatever may happen; but they have imposed an impossible job upon you. In calling me 'Mr. O'Brien' you have already broken Mr. Balfour's prison rules as clearly as I mean to do myself. You see the thing can't be done even by his own officers." He shook his head with a gesture of despair. He said: "The city is gone mad; we will have the whole prison about our ears." He mentioned that the Mayor, Alderman John O'Brien, who was a Visiting Justice, had warned him to give him notice whenever any attack was to be made upon me, and told him unless he promised to do so that he intended to remain in the prison all day and all night until the thing was decided. The prison Chaplain, Father Richard Barrett, who became one of the most treasured friends of my life, and who was a more resolute hothead than myself, was capable of anything. Even the prison doctor, a Mallowman, Dr. Moriarty, was not to be relied upon. And there was a perfect mob of reporters about the gate. "I'll

chuck the job," muttered the Governor, as in a soliloquy. "Let them get somebody else to do their dirty work for them." Then as an afterthought: "You mentioned in your interview that you only intended to make this fight yourself. Will you, at all events, ask Mr. Mandeville to make no resistance? I have had him placed in the next cell, so that you could talk to him through the openings above the cell doors. I will take care there shall be nobody listening."

This I readily agreed to. I reminded my gallant friend of the thesis already repeatedly discussed between us—that mine was intended to be an individual test case under peculiarly favourable conditions; that, if I should succeed, the same rule of treatment must inevitably be extended to every political prisoner; that it would be obviously unfair to expose to the same risks the mass of Mr. Balfour's victims, who had responsibilities from which I was free, and who would be pitilessly maltreated in secret in the absence of that white light of publicity which would be a pretty sure guarantee against foul play towards myself: and that very specially in John Mandeville's own case to follow my example would be needlessly to double the rigours of imprisonment, where he was heavily handicapped as one accustomed to the sports and rude health of his pleasant country life. He neither agreed nor disagreed, and could not be induced to argue the matter at all beyond genially turning the tables by contrasting his ruddy strength with my own puny qualifications for a tug-of-war. The day passed without any attempt to enforce the prison rules against either of us. The Mayor, John O'Brien, paid us two or three visits, and was only dissuaded from spending the night in the prison by the Governor's assurance that he had given notice to the Prisons Board that neither he nor his subordinates in Cork would lay a hand on their prisoners.

In the middle of the night I was aroused by the

irruption of a strange warder and half-a-dozen armed policemen, who bade me get up—that I was going. They were plainly under stern orders not to say another word. It required no vivid imagination to read evil omens in the hour, the darkness, the click of the bolts, the grim silence of those armed men, the barrels of whose rifles stood out in points of steel from the chiaroscuro of the circle of light shed from the lanthorn. The impression was not made more cheerful by the apparition of the Governor in the corridor as we passed out, tongue-tied and solemn, like a chaplain who had drawn aside after saying his last words to a condemned culprit. I found John Mandeville awaiting me in the guardroom in the midst of a half-visible mob of policemen and soldiers. How easily the logic of what has been well called “the scientific inhumanity” of the Balfour theory of government fell to pieces at the first contact with reality was absurdly demonstrated by the arrangements for our deportation from Cork. The prisoners deserving of worse punishment than burglars were conveyed through the silent city in a carriage and pair surrounded by a party of cavalry, and were ushered into the first class carriage of a special train awaiting them at the Glanmire Terminus. A wink and a furtive grasp of the hand from the railway-guard may have given the explanation of the illogicality; very likely Captain Plunkett had got a hint that, if there was any foul-play on foot, the engine driver would decline to get up steam, and the guard to step on board, and the telegraph clerk to wire the movements of the special train—to such an incredible pitch had public feeling been enkindled. But the moment that danger was negotiated, logic reasserted its sway: for the blinds of the first-class carriage were pulled down as rigorously as though it were a travelling seraglio, and not for worlds could our escort be got to break their uncanny silence as to

our destination. The mystery was all the more spiontine that the District Inspector who sat opposite us was an old shooting and hunting companion of John Mandeville amidst the Galtees, and took his revenge for his enforced muteness by cordially shaking his old friend's hand as soon as he had transferred his prisoner to other hands.

As the morning broke, and we went on hour after hour without stopping, and without any glimpse of the country, it was impossible to guess where we were; and it became more and more probable that we were being transported to England. But at long last we came to a dead-stop at some station which we could only vaguely guess to be Portarlinton, and the special train was shunted on to a branch-line which seemed to betoken some prison in the remote West as our place of banishment. The train was not, however, half an hour in motion when it stopped again, and we were ushered on a platform in face of a name-board bearing the inscription, full of fate for both of us, and of doom for one—"Tullamore." The explanation of the flight from Cork was at once as clear as crystal. The Prisons Board were daunted by the revolt of their own staff—Governor, Chaplain, and Doctor as well as turnkeys—but they were still more intimidated by the vigilance of public opinion represented by a Mayor of known determination, who could not legally be prevented from being a looker-on, by the troop of Pressmen, English as well as Irish, who besieged the gate, straining for the news, and by a city fast warming into a fever of insurrection. The spectre of publicity must be exorcised at all hazards. In no other Irish prison were the conditions so perfectly answerable as in Tullamore. It passed for a region of tepid nationality as different from the Cork brand as cold water from wine. The Visiting Justices were, with one exception, landlords of an Orange tradition, and (as it was then

taken for granted) the few Nationalist Magistrates in the King's County, not to say any outside of it, were debarred as effectually as the formidable Mayor of Cork himself from prying into what might go on within the prison walls. "Scientific inhumanity" had nothing to dread from the Protestant Governor, Captain Featherstonehaugh, whose Cromwellian descent and deceitfully truculent face seemed to give assurance of an Ironside's contempt for small scruples ; or from the Protestant Prison Doctor, Dr. Ridley, who, poor man, was fated to sacrifice his own life as well as that of one of his prisoners, to an honest sense of duty, however odious. But the most potent consideration of all in deciding for Tullamore was that the Prison Chaplain—the Very Rev. Dr. M'Alroy, the parish priest—was a Whig of the strictest rite, who had picked up his anti-Nationalist views from Cardinal Cullen, and who, when "Buckshot" Forster visited Tullamore in the height of his Coercion savageries, had stood by his side to implore a hearing for him when the arch-Coercionist, surrounded with a forest of bayonets, made a speech bragging that his conquest of Ireland was at last complete. If there was a prison chaplain in Ireland who could be relied upon to be as silent concerning the secrets of the prison house as its stone walls, Dublin Castle counted with a chuckle he had been found in the parish priest of Tullamore. One need not believe Mr. Balfour's Irish policy to have been devised with the morals of a Neronian exquisite to find something infinitely repellent to all usually received notions of honour or manliness in these shabby tactics.

It would be idle to deny the sense of loneliness, as of entrance into a city of tombs, that settled down upon me when John Mandeville and District Inspector Creagh shook hands, and we had a parting shake hands with one another, as the iron gates closed behind us with the deadness of a coffin lid nailed

down. There was the same ceremonial of the prison suit laid out on the stool of the cell, the plank bed planted against the wall, and Captain Fetherstonehaugh reading me out the Prison Rules with the gravity of a judge assuming the black cap, and, as I thought at the time, with a metallic harshness of voice intended to suggest that he was a man who would stand no nonsense. He was succeeded by Dr. Ridley who, on the contrary, was soft almost to tears, said he knew how shocking it all was, that he was a great deal more miserable a man than myself, and besought me to save him by a formal submission to the Prison Rules, after which he would be free to make me my own master in everything I could desire. Every other day he kept repeating the same formula : "My God, why did they ever send you here ? It is monstrous and unnatural to be treating you like this ; but what can I do ? I have a wife and family and must earn my few ha'pence." And he earned them at the expense of his life, although after a resistance which made his death an eternal shame to his paymasters. The last resource was the venerable Chaplain, Dr. M'Alroy. He delivered a somewhat irritating homily on the duty of submission to the higher powers and the impossibility of resisting a discipline that had all the power of England at its back. "It would have been an excellent argument, sir, for submission to the Penal Laws, and would have saved the Irish Catholics some centuries of trouble," I could not forbear from snapping out. He clinched his argument by reading from the *Pall Mall Gazette*—clearly put into the old gentleman's hands by some emissary from Dublin Castle—condemning my proposed infraction of the prison rules, however barbarous, as a foolish playing into Mr. Balfour's hands. "There is the view of your best friend, Mr. Stead," he added, triumphantly—a view by the way for which Mr. Stead afterwards did ample public

penance. My hint that I was not disposed to give the key of my conscience even to the *Pall Mall Gazette* completed his horror of my obstinacy. "But they have their orders," he cried, "They will strip you by force and beat you down. You know it can only end one way—you will be killed, and it will be a mortal sin—it will be suicide." For the first time my temper quite gave way. "Dr. M'Alroy," I said, "you are the only man in this prison standing like Moses between the living and the dead. I did not think there was a priest in all Ireland who would make me that answer. If you know your duty, I know mine." Before the words had well left my lips, I heartily repented them; but they had the effect of a thunderstroke on the kind-hearted old priest, and the effect was to startle him into a sudden understanding of the whole situation. He was transformed from that hour forth into one of the most faithful and affectionate friends, and for all his quaint Whiggery, one of the most delightful Irishmen, and of the most thorough paced sympathisers the heart of man could desire in a soul-searching emergency. As he was leaving, Captain Fetherstonhaugh's bulky figure blocked the way with the order: "The class is going out" meaning that the common law prisoners were mustering for exercise, and that I was to fall in among their ranks. It was the first trial of strength on that particular issue. Dr. M'Alroy threw up his hands with a gesture of despair that seemed to require no words to translate it, for the Governor took his departure with him and made no further attempt to enforce the order. My first night on a plank bed was, with a little ingenuity in tucking my topcoat under my shoulder points, not much rougher than a hundred experiences in night-mail trains on campaign duty.

The next morning Dr. Ridley arrived in a state of much excitement to announce that he had ordered

my removal to hospital. The explanation of the sudden decision came with a visit from Dr. M'Alroy, who, with a gleam of fun under his overhanging eyebrows, cried out: "Bedad, you have set the town on fire," and informed me that the battalion of Scots Guards who had cheered me in Mitchelstown, and had been drafted into Tullamore the previous day as a prison garrison, had renewed their cheers at the Jail Gate, and had been early that morning removed by special train. The Doctor walked over with me to my new quarters—a spacious room, with a mattress-bed and a fire burning—and made a piteous appeal to me to end the quarrel on my own terms, upon the simple condition that I would wear the blue hospital dress which was lying on the bed. The hospital suit, he explained, was quite another thing from the ordinary prison uniform, and was, he more than suggested, specially invented to satisfy my vow not to wear the uniform of criminals. The poor man was crest-fallen to find that my difficulty was not a tailoring question as between blue and grey. How little the distinction between the prison homespun and that of outer Ireland really mattered, was amusingly illustrated by a remark of Dr. Duggan, the Bishop of Clonfert, who with two other Bishops visited me in "the cage" in Cork Jail, while still an untried prisoner, and consequently entitled to wear my own garments. "My poor man, have they put the prison clothes on you already?" moaned the old Bishop, and great was the merriment of his brother Prelates when I rallied him on the insult to my tailor of mistaking my dingy and doubtless clumsy suit of homespun tweed for the stuff and the taste of the prison clothier. Nor were the Doctor's visions of the improved dietary under the new conditions much more alluring. For one long accustomed to all sorts of hurried and irregular meals, and sometimes to no meal at all, the ordinary prison fare

presented no serious inconvenience. The stuff purporting to be cocoa, the contents of the weird cauldron called soup, and the slabs of suet pudding were not to be negotiated, but the black bread was little below a tolerable war-bread standard, and the three potatoes served in a net, which were the Friday dinner, and which I had to peel with my fingers with a gambler's interest in the question whether some black spot in any of the three might not diminish the bulk—the feast washed down with new milk saved from my breakfast allowance—furnished me with a banquet of rather keener relish than if it came from the copper saucepans of a Parisian *cordon bleu*. “What are we to do with you?” cried the Doctor, wringing his hands. “Upon my word, that is just what is puzzling myself,” was the reply.

Days passed without any attempt to make any of the three vetoed Rules operative. The unfortunate Governor developed a new side of his character which most truly gave me more personal distress than any discomfort of my own. From the first faint bullying he passed to entreaty and from entreaty to actual tears. The huge man swayed to and fro in a state of distraction of which two eyes turned in diametrically opposite directions seemed to be only one of the symptoms, as he repeated: “If I don't do it they will get somebody else to do it, and what is to become of my little family?” I strove my hardest to console him by assuring him I could not have a particle of ill-will against prison officials who only obeyed orders under compulsion; that my war was with high placed politicians, who used both their officials and their prisoners as pawns in a heartless game of their own. One morning he came in with a particularly long face. “The Chairman has come,” he announced, as if he were announcing the executioner—his own as well as mine. “The Chairman,” was the Hon. Charles Bourke, the Chair-

man of the Prisons Board, a disciplinarian the bare mention of whose name made the Irish prison warder, or Governor for that matter, shiver all over. "The Chairman," an exceedingly tall, haughty man, with the air of a Sultan of the Arabian Nights, at the clapping of whose hands a thousand slaves made answer—stalked into the room with his hat on, and without prologue barked out: "I understand you are disobeying the Prison Rules." Here was the entire Balfour *régime* incarnate before my eyes in one insolent tyrant. "The Chairman," to use a Scottish phrase, instantly "raised my corruption." In a tone wilfully as offensive as his own, I replied: "As long as a man claiming to be a gentleman keeps his hat on in my room, I shall have nothing more to say to him." The great man stalked out of the room again, without another word. Wilfrid Blunt, in his entertaining Diary, mentions a similar incident, when the same man entered his cell at Galway, and although received with cordial courtesy by the prisoner, who was the bosom friend of his brother, Hon. Algernon Bourke (known in society as "Button") rewarded Mr. Blunt's forbearance by "leaving the cell abruptly after a few uncivil words about the condition of my cell," and ordering the removal of his rug, blankets, and of a bible printed in legible type in mere wanton insolence. (p. 393). Whereas in my own case the autocrat abandoned any present attempt to avenge my open defiance, and I became the hero of the prison staff who could not believe their eyes or ears when they learned how the bully had been flouted. Showing, perhaps, that the French proverb may sometimes fit the aristocrat as well as the horny-handed:

Oignez vilain, il vous poindra,
Poignez vilain, il vous oindra.

The Doctor, a few days afterwards, confided to

me that the Governor had been to Dublin to threaten resignation, repeating his mournful litany: "Why didn't they do it in Cork? Why did they put them upon us in Tullamore?" By this time the real object of the transfer to Tullamore—the calculation that the outside public could hear no more of what was passing inside the walls of that Cromwellian stronghold—had been completely baffled. An unsuspected clause of the Prison Act was discovered by which not only the Visiting Justices of a particular jail, but every magistrate of the county in which the prisoner had been convicted was entitled to visit him and report as to his treatment. Accordingly, the magistrates of the vast County of Cork began to descend upon Tullamore to break the sepulchral silence in which the operations of "The Chairman" were to be carried on "according to plan," and the unfortunate Governor found a new cause of distraction in the duty of escorting not only the local Nationalist Justice, Dr. Moorhead—a man of skill, acumen, and tenacity—who now became a daily visitor—but the magistrates whom almost every day's trains were beginning to bring from the most distant parts of the County Cork, while the jail gates were once more besieged by Irish and English pressmen waiting to snap up the reports of the visitors. From the moment his anti-publicity boom was broken, the Chief Secretary in the jackboots of Cromwell proved himself once again to be a Cromwell-in-plaster-of-paris. I have no doubt Dr. Ridley was not leading me into any trap when with a chuckle he gave me to understand that "everybody was in a funk" about undertaking any physical attack to force me into the prison uniform. It was his hint which emboldened me to throw off my clothes at night. Governmental genius hit upon a nobler expedient than honest force.

Before daybreak one winter morning, I woke to find a man crawling by the side of my bed in the

dark. It was the Protestant turnkey specially set over me, who had silently unlocked the door of the cell, and creeping on his hands and knees had got possession of my clothes, and substituted a blue hospital suit before my cry could reach him as he stole away. Like Hohenlinden "it was a famous victory," and Captain Fetherstonehaugh, who arrived at daybreak with his burglar turnkey, with the order that I must get up and dress, was piteously astonished to find that there was anything left of the battle except the shouting. I declined to leave the bed until my clothing was restored to me, and the Governor departed with a groan to communicate with Dublin Castle for further orders. Again, day followed day, the prisoner nailed to his bed, Dr. Moorhead and redoubled swarms of Cork magistrates flocking to his bedside, the Pressmen raising to a fever height the public excitement as to the upshot of the uneven struggle, and the author and ministers of the blood-and-iron programme of the Clouds conversation, standing in a condition of miserable uncertainty, neither boldly taking action nor honestly abandoning it.¹

¹ During the endless weeks while the duel within the prison walls was proceeding, popular anxiety as to the result reached a pitch of positive agony which perhaps can best be understood from the verses published in *United Ireland* at the time from the pen of Miss Charlotte G. O'Brien, the golden-hearted daughter of William Smith O'Brien, who was the most luckless of insurrectionary leaders and the most chivalrous type of Irish gentleman of his time, and perhaps of all times :

WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY

Ah, poor Willie ! ah, poor fellow ! as ye sit within your cell,
Do you hear the people praying, them you loved so true and well ?
Do you hear the talk they're talking as they meet upon the road ?
" Ah, poor Willie ! ah, poor fellow ! but he's in the hands of God ! "

" God be with him ! " so they're saying, " for he felt our cruel wrong,
Felt for every pain we're feeling, struck for us—and he was strong.
Not that he was rich, poor fellow !—only rich in truth and love,
Strong in justice, rich in faith, and great in trusting God above ! "

Their minds were made up for them in an unexpected manner. Harrington despatched an old Fenian friend of us both in Tralee, John Kelly, to arrange for the smuggling of a new suit of civilian clothes into the prison, and, if it should be necessary, for my escape. Kelly, one of the most insinuating of

“ If ye suffer in the prison—did not Jesus suffer, too !
 If ye die, sure He that loved you died for love of us and you.
 Ye may die—and so can we—and so our fathers died before,
 But the great God has ye safely, if ye live or die, asthore ! ”

Ah, poor Willie, ah, poor fellow ! ye must bear a bitter lot !
 Though the tyrants took you from us, never fear that ye're forgot,
 No, we're talking, always talking, as we meet on every road—
 “ Ah, poor Willie ! ah, poor fellow ! sure he's in the hands of
 God.”

Nov. 19, 1887.

CHARLOTTE GRACE O'BRIEN.

One other sample of how the Irish Nation can feel in such emergencies may be forgiven. It was one of thousands of letters I received after my release, and came from one of the most eminent ecclesiastics in the South :

Youghal, Jan. 22, '88.

My dear Mr. O'Brien,

I could not approach you before now. I was occupied watching the surge of universal sentiment.

Delivered and deliverer, all hail ! Welcome back from your life in the catacombs—but how long shall you be permitted to breathe the air of liberty ? Balfour and you cannot co-exist in Ireland—that much is pretty clear. They will kill you if they can with any show of formality. O'Brien is wanted to live. Don't let them kill you. I confess I at one time had given up all hope of ever seeing you again in this world. The good God has saved you, and the prayers of the innocent little children. Four thousand Hail Marys a day were offered by my dear little ones of our convent school. “ Mother, you did not ask us to-day whether we said the Hail Marys for Mr. O'Brien,” said they to the Nun. “ No, my children, for I knew you said them,” was the reply. The clouds are growing darker and thicker—it is the last desperate effort of Ireland's secular foes. Live if you can that you may see the victory. *Au revoir* at Mallow. Of course you are not to reply.

Yours ever devoted,

D. KELLER, P.P.

W. O'Brien, Esq., M.P.

diplomatists, succeeded in enlisting the co-operation of two prison officials—Mr. Geoghegan, the Clerk at the Gate, and a young warder named Forde. The plan was that Forde should be enabled to penetrate to my room in the hospital buildings during the hours from the evening locking up to the final round of visits at nine o'clock, the staff being dismissed from duty during these hours, and the keys collected in the Clerk's office at the front gate. The plan went within an ace of a disastrous defeat. While Warder Forde, with the bunch of keys in his possession, was delivering his contraband parcel to me, a knock came at the front gate. Looking out through the judas-hole for inspecting callers, the Clerk was horrified to see a local Orange Visiting Justice named T—— who was in the habit of calling up in the evenings for a gossip and a glass of grog with the Governor. There was no key with which to open the gate! Geoghegan's presence of mind saved us from an immediate discovery of the plot and a certain sentence of penal servitude for himself and Warder Forde. He reported to the Governor, snug at his own fireside: "Mr. T—— is outside, sir, and wants to see you. But he's very drunk" (a condition, fortunately, habitual enough with Mr. T—— to command the ready belief of the Governor). Life or death hung upon the answer. The good luck was ours. "Oh! for God's sake tell him I'm out," cried the Governor in alarm. Mr. T—— toddled away, and there was no longer any need for the missing key.

While this little tragi-comedy was enacting at the front gate, Warder Forde, armed with his bunch of keys, was unlocking my room, and to my amaze (for I had been kept entirely uninformed of the design), groping his way to my bedside in the dark with the bundle of clothing which was to decide the fortunes of Mr. Balfour's famous prison policy. The parcel contained an outfit complete from head to foot, a suit of Blarney tweed, with shirt, collar, handkerchief, boots

and soft hat, even to a green silk necktie, to which no doubt some tender feminine hand had attached a scrap of paper bearing the one word, "Courage!"¹ The operation, which Mr. T——'s alcoholic reputation alone saved from a catastrophic ending was completed without interruption. When at unlocking hour the next morning the turnkey, who had had his own moment of humble victory as a clothes-snatcher, beheld his prisoner sitting on the bed, clad in mysterious habiliments to him as unaccountable as a suit of supernatural armour, he literally took to his heels, without a word, as though he had seen an apparition, leaving the door wide open. He returned a few minutes afterwards in the wake of ill-starred Captain Fetherstonehaugh, whose bedraggled condition would have irresistibly forced a smile, only that the pathos of the unhappy man's situation was more moving still. He raised his eyes in a desperate effort to get these two organs to concentrate their united energies in an attempt to make sure that they were not playing some diabolical trick on him, shook his head several times with the air of one for whom misfortune had done its last turn, and without uttering a word quitted the room, the turnkey having this time recovered sufficient presence of mind to shoot the lock behind him.

The next day the country to its remotest recesses was ringing with the news from Tullamore. The depth of the emotion, unimaginable now, was not altogether without its justification, for it was felt, in England as well as in Ireland, that the prison policy, on which Mr. Balfour had built his hopes, had received a blow from which it never could recover.

¹ It was one of the curiosities of those extraordinary times that the Blarney tweed (although a dismally inartistic specimen of the products of the famous Blarney factory, being of a thick material, cut up into ugly squares, and of a colour that might be anything from drab to purple) for years set the glass of fashion for young Nationalists, and created a demand which it required the increase of the factory staff by several hundreds to supply.

CHAPTER XX

A BRACE OF TRAGEDIES

(1887-8)

Mr. Balfour lived to take a kindlier view of the Irish people and they of him. His Congested Districts Board was an essay of much promise for the poorest portion of the country. He was the leader of the Government which allowed George Wyndham, by means of the unofficial Land Conference of 1903, to carry out the greatest scheme of conciliation ever effected in Ireland.¹ It can scarcely be doubted that in the softened light of a closer knowledge of a country to him then quite unknown, and of old antagonists whom he fantastically misunderstood, some still small voice of remorse must mingle with his recollections of a

¹ The credit must be qualified by the fact that Mr. Balfour unhappily aided certain wreckers in Ireland by making the Chief Secretaryship untenable for Wyndham when, in circumstances more favourable than have ever since recurred, he set about a settlement of the problem of Irish Self-Government by the same methods of conciliation and consent by which the spectre of the Agrarian Difficulty had been for ever laid. There is reason to know that this will be made painfully clear as soon as the papers connected with Wyndham's quitting Ireland, which he directed should remain sealed for a certain period after his death, shall have been published. In view of his own subsequent memorable work as Chief Secretary, it is pleasant to learn from the book of his near relative and friend, Wilfrid Blunt, that, when Wyndham came over as Private Secretary of Mr. Balfour, he from the beginning disliked and foresaw the failure of his chief's policy of exasperation.

great life, which, with a simpler faith in human nature, might have been greater. No matter how agreeable it would be for myself to draw a wet sponge over Mr. Balfour's early follies in word and deed, it would be, however, a poor service to Englishmen who still dream of governing Ireland against her people's will to minimise the failure, moral and material, of the Chief Secretary whom his countrymen would, perhaps, be inclined to classify as the most intellectual and courageous of the long dynasty who have come and gone since the Union. It would be absurd to apply literally to the brilliant society of "the Souls" of which Mr. Balfour was the most distinguished ornament, the description of its ideal given by another only less distinguished member which was "to sit crowned with roses, talking poetry to beautiful women all the night long"; or yet Mr. Blunt's analysis of the mentality of the Balfour brothers as Darwinian philosophers, who hardened their hearts against the weak and unfit among the nations. But it is impossible to study the irrefragable facts of Mr. Balfour's doings in Ireland, without bewilderment to find how closely refined sensibilities may be intertwined with a callousness not too far from cruelty, personal courage with the vacillation of the politician, intellectual greatness with intellectual levity, and a doubtless sensitive code of honour with divagations which the common mind will find it hard to reconcile with truthfulness or honesty.

A statesman with the gift of vision would either have replied to the intransigent of the prison-breakers by a stern enforcement of the law, or have recognised that he was fighting against nature—even jailor nature—and frankly dropped his fad even though the laugh should be against him. The course actually pursued was an incredible jumble of provocations and indecision. For four weeks following the introduction of the Blarney suit, the firm and

resolute Government stood absurdly hesitating to lay forcible hands on them, and yet unable to resist a spiteful temptation to go on keeping their prisoner in daily and nightly doubt when the attack would be delivered. Two fresh turnkeys were ostentatiously imported from Mountjoy to mount guard ; a policeman armed with a carbine tramped up and down night and day outside my window. Mr. Balfour thought it good taste to publish a letter jeering at his prisoner in the vein of Bab Ballads wit which was his wisest instrument of government, and when I managed to send forth a reply scrawled with a pin in blood pricked from my fingers, retorted by having a spy-hole punched through the thickness of the wall, the slide of which was for ever clicking to make me feel that unknown eyes were upon me. While my own purpose never sagged, it may freely be owned that this ingenious system of nerve-racking succeeded in making me pass the most miserable three or four weeks of my life. I dared not throw off my clothes, nor even lie on the bed at night, and run the risk of falling asleep, lest the constant watchwords and changing of guard should at any moment be the signal for the expected attack. Sitting by the fire by day alone was it possible to snatch an occasional hour's sleep.¹ Certain

¹ To complete the chapter of anomalies, wholly different treatment was awarded to Mr. T. D. Sullivan, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, in the same prison in which John Mandeville was being slowly bled to death, and I was myself only saved because the Castle people were forced to keep a cowardly count of my pulse from day to day. The Lord Mayor was imprisoned for publishing in *The Nation* one or two reports of meetings of "suppressed" Branches, and having the good fortune to be tried by an Irremovable Magistrate, the Chief Divisional Magistrate of Dublin, was ordered to be treated as a first-class misdemeanant, with the right to furnish his own room, to order in his meals from the hotel, to take in newspapers and books at discretion, and to receive daily visits from his family in his pleasant quarters. I was myself summoned for the same day and before the same tribunal for similar publi-

scurvy insinuations in the Chief Secretary's letter that I had been seeking special prison indulgences for myself forced me at the same time to reject the Hospital dietary, and go back to the original prison fare, and piteous it was to see the doctor, struggling to save his Chief from the effect of his pleasantries by slipping chunks of beef into the unspeakable "vegetable soup," and, when detected

cations in *United Ireland* many times more numerous, since we published systematically from week to week reports from every "suppressed" Branch in the country; but dreading that the Chief Magistrate would make the same order as to my treatment and would thus provoke an awkward collision between the order of the Irremovable Magistrate and that of the Removables as to the same person, the valiant Crown Prosecutors adjourned the summonses against me to an indefinite date which, in fact, was never reached. Thus, within the same walls, and only a hundred yards apart, two diametrically opposite systems of treatment were in operation for the same offence.

His "criminality" rendered the venerable Lord Mayor a furious favourite with every Liberal audience in Britain. He used to tell the story of a comical experience of his at some prim Nonconformist dinner-table after a meeting in a Northern English city where Earl Spencer and the Marquis of Ripon had accompanied him on the platform. "T. D.," who had a unique gift for singing his own songs with a raciness that captured all hearts, was called upon for a song, and burst out into one celebrating the glories of boycotting a landgrabber "down in County Clare." The chorus ran thus:

"Three brave blacksmiths, down in County Clare,
Wouldn't shoe the grabber's horse—wouldn't shoe his mare—
They scorn'd his dirty money, for his threats they didn't care—
They'd rather shoeless go themselves than shame the County
Clare!

The first verse brought an expression of pain to the countenances of his august listeners, but "T. D.'s" genial ways and riotous spirits proved irresistible. Before he finished he had the once Viceroy of Ireland and the once Viceroy of India joining, like rollicking schoolboys, in the chorus:

"Three brave blacksmiths, down in County Clare,
Wouldn't shoe the grabber's horse—wouldn't shoe his mare."

in the generous deceit, seeing me weighed day by day with anxious eyes, exulting or dejected as the scales told their varying tale.

The scales would have dipped more heavily still only for the slices of cold mutton which dear old Father M'Alroy now began to import in his coat pockets, and with a tyranny there was no resisting hectored me into devouring. The old gentleman's daily chat, now fast changing from the most crusted Whiggery to a patriotism with a smell of gunpowder, was a feast even more delightful than his cold leg of mutton. The strain betimes caused me to be haunted by a darker apprehension. Since my entry into the prison I had been wholly without outdoor exercise. This eternity of solitude, and the absence of occupation for mind or body, might well have ended in the worst of all fates, but for two devices which supplied me with plentiful mental food. One was the endeavour to recollect passages of Dante's *Divine Comedy* which were once my delight, but had long faded from my memory. Under the powerful aid of my present excitation, the rich Italian verse gradually came out as from a palimpsest, word by word, and passage by passage, until I could rejoice-fully march up and down declaiming the magnificent music which has never since left my memory. As my recollections of the Tuscan chant began to be exhausted, there followed a choir of smaller singing-birds: Irish, English and French. My other resource was devoting a night apiece to my personal recollections of each of the thirty-two counties, the meetings held there, the wars and skirmishes, the friendships formed, the fallen comrades, the ballads ringing with its name. Cavan was the only county of the thirty-two which I had only once or twice visited; but even on the Cavan night I had a glorious symposium with Cavan's immortal member, Joe Biggar, his fearlessness of the old Scottish

Covenanter camp, his pawky humour and kind heart, his quaint code of political morals : " Never resign anything," " never withdraw anything," " never apologise for anything," and " never enter into an arbitration until you've first squared the arbitrator."

Truly nights and suppers of the gods, for all the threatenings of what was to come ; but of this a new and formidable possibility was now looming up. For the mesmeric " John Kelly of Tralee " had by this time arranged a goodly plot for the night, come when it might, when the hesitating Chief Secretary should make up his mind to strike. He had secured the allegiance of four warders, including two of the imported Protestants, in addition to the indispensable Clerk at the front gate. Of any party of four the Governor might select for his midnight raid, at least two were sure to be of our partisans. The idea was that I was to make for the door as it was unlocked, and push my way through the warders in the darkness, our own friends seizing the keys from the Governor and in the confusion locking him into the cell. The danger point was how to pass the armed policeman patrolling the passage outside my window. The circumstances of the moment were to determine whether we were to make a rush to disarm him or take our chance of a shot from his carbine in our run straight for the front gate, after which there were elaborate arrangements for smuggling me into safe quarters, together with such of the prison officials as the night's adventure might have compromised.

In the meantime, Governor, Doctor, Chaplain and warders were left in as miserable uncertainty as myself as to when the order for action might be given. Mr. Balfour now hit upon a plan for resolving his own indecision, which was destined to bring a stain of blood upon his name that will not easily be effaced. One morning a man professing to be a doctor knocked at the gate, and without giving the Governor or the

Prison Doctor the smallest indication of who he was, signed the Visitors' Book with the initials "G.P.B." (I suppose "General Prisons Board"), and requested to be shown to my room. This secret emissary, as it afterwards turned out, had been selected as an espial to advise the Chief Secretary how far his own officials could be relied upon in a policy of Thorough *jusqu'au bout*. The selection was one of astounding indiscretion. He was a Dr. Barr, the Medical Officer of Kirkdale Prison, and a disciplinarian of iron repute in the English Prison Service; but, what was of very much more seriousness in the man who was to determine issues of life or death as between Irish Nationalists and their jailors, Dr. Barr was a north of Ireland Orangeman of elemental bitterness and the Chairman of a Unionist Association in Liverpool seething with prejudice against Mr. Balfour's Irish prisoners. In his relations with myself, Dr. Barr proved to be a replica of the Hon. Charles Bourke—equally abrupt, insolent and stony, and in the result equally ready to digest the venom of his spleen; for it appears to be certain that it was Dr. Barr's report which decided the Chief Secretary's capitulation on each of my three conditions, whilst it no less certainly brought in its train the breaking and death of John Mandeville and the suicide of Dr. Ridley, for whom the terror of "the Unknown" or "the Mysterious One" (these were his own expressions) continued to be, in all our conversations, the haunting spectre of his life. It is possible also that some inkling of the machinations of "John Kelly of Tralee" had reached Dublin Castle, and confirmed Dr. Barr's own evil report of the unreliability of almost everybody connected with the Irish Prison Service.

But even to the last the surrender was as ungracious as it was tardy. For more than a week after Mr. Balfour had publicly announced in England that no further attempt would be made to enforce

the prison rules against me, his prisoner was still submitted to the petty torment of being compelled to tramp up and down all night, without venturing to undress, listening to every sound that might be the herald of an encounter full of anxieties, neither Governor nor Doctor being in a position to make sure what the next visit from "the Unknown" might portend. My evidence at the Mandeville inquest gives some notion of the incredible silliness, as of a nagging woman, with which the tormentation was continued to the last :—

"It was then and then only (on an undertaking from the Governor that there would be no attack) I was able to take off my clothes. Then, when the clothes stolen from me were returned, it was in the most extraordinary manner, bit by bit. One day I got back my coat and vest ; two or three days after when there was snow on the ground I got back my top-coat. After that it was intimated to me that my linen shirt, which I had never changed since I entered, would be washed for me, and next—six weeks after my imprisonment—the Governor told me that the Prisons Board had made an order, apart altogether from the Doctor, that I should be allowed to wear my own clothes during the remainder of my imprisonment." My two other defiances of prison discipline were never further contested.

But the main point was that the seemingly impossible had come to pass. The prison rules of adamant had melted like snow under the hot breath of public opinion. The victory was so complete that contempt and amusement began to mingle with the popular indignation and with my own. When on the day of my release the Governor proffered a third-class ticket to Dublin, he submitted with a groan to the demand that it must be a first-class one, and when on his remonstrance I pointed to the Prison Rules ordaining that a prisoner on release must be sent

back under the same conditions on which he was brought from the place of conviction, observing: "I was brought from Cork in a special train, and only that I am a moderate man, Governor, I should demand a special train to be sent back in," there was a gleam of malice as well as of forlorn fun in the worthy man's eyes as he replied to my small joke: "Upon my soul, I should not object, if you could only make Mr. Balfour pay for it."

In all that had occurred my personal share was nothing more than immovableness—call it stubbornness if you like. My one grain of individual glory was reaped in the House of Commons, the place of all others where my brilliant antagonist felt the sting. If one may trust the instinct of nearly every member of the House of Commons, expressed or suppressed, of foe and friend, as well as a still small voice of comfort within myself, the "face to face" answer to Mr. Balfour with respect to his vaunted administration in Ireland was a palpable hit. It was the Chief Secretary's own invincible ignorance of Irish feeling that, as usual, undid him. Upon the calculation that my speech would be devoted to my personal grievances, he came down to the House armed with a dossier of select readings from medical reports, and squalid official particulars with which he proposed to regale the House in the style of delicately poisoned raillery, which he had made his principal weapon of Irish government. He sprawled on the Treasury Bench with the elegance of one of Fabre's long-legged spider-crabs on his couch, curiously watching the Irish fly blundering into his silken toils. To his dismay, there was not a syllable of personal complaint, but on the contrary, a triumphant aggression rallying him on his Irish follies, defending, with the manifest sympathy of the House, the offence he had held up to execration, twitting him with his failure to break the squares of a single tenants'

combination, or cow the spirit of his prisoners, whether he relied on bloodshed or on a lackadaisical frivolity, and making a confident claim that his administration was earning the condemnation of the British electorate as well as the contempt of the nation he flattered himself his pretty sarcasms had subjugated. The only allusion of any kind to the prison barbarities was the reading without comment a newspaper report of Lord Salisbury's high-bred way of dealing with the matter :

"I do not refer to Mr. O'Brien's small-clothes (laughter). Their vicissitudes would furnish a theme for an epic (renewed laughter). I hope an Irish bard will arise worthy of the subject (continued laughter). But taking the man apart from his clothes (roars of laughter)."

"I notice," was my only comment, "that the way in which this refined wit of a great aristocrat is received by gentlemen on the Tory benches does not quite rise to 'roars of laughter.'" The shame-faced silence in his own ranks, and the exultant baying from the Opposition benches once for all decided Mr. Balfour that his store of prepared smartnesses had better not be aired, for he threw his notes and spicy quotations from him with a gesture of disgust, and when, on my sitting down, there arose an all but universal demand for "Balfour," which rained on him for several minutes like the strokes of a whip cutting his flesh, the skilled dialectician curled himself together on his seat with an air of conscious bafflement never before or since seen on his face in the House of Commons and signalled to the unemotional Mr. Finlay to take his place for the reply. When, after twenty-four hours for reflection, he was compelled to tackle the subject, it was only to shamle through a few quotations from *United Ireland*, interlarded with flouts and jeers of a feebleness which made the most injudicious of his admirers grieve. Sir William Harcourt was, no doubt,

in the region of hyperbole when he paid to the Irish speech the compliment that "it was the most remarkable speech I have ever heard in the House—not even excepting Mr. Gladstone's—and will be read and admired, and arouse sympathy all over the dominions of the Queen." But it may be affirmed without affectation that he spoke the feeling of most enemies, as well as of all friends when he declared it proved that "instead of the Government putting down the National League, it was the National League that was putting down the Government." And that was where the hitting told.

But the worst had not yet been heard from Tullamore. A distinguished Irishman¹ summed up in these words the success of my resistance to the policy of prison degradation upon every point in dispute: "It hardly seemed a fair fight at first—the prisoner alone in his cell; the jailor with the whole force of the Empire behind him. The secret of the prisoner's success was short and simple: the prisoner was not afraid to die, and the jailor was afraid to kill him." There can now be little doubt that the official afraidness arose from the breakdown of the arrangements for burying the operation in secrecy and silence. The moment the white light of publicity reached the walled-in prison cell, the prison directors shrank from the searchlight with the timidity of maleficent spirits surprised by daybreak. They spared because the British constituencies threatened to be unsparing. No less unflattering explanation, unhappily, can be offered for the very different treatment, with its tragic sequel, meted out to John Mandeville, in the same prison, and for the same offence. The manifest reason was that the public opinion, whose gaze was fastened upon the more dramatic duel between the Chief

¹ Mr. E. Dwyer Gray's *Treatment of Political Prisoners in Ireland*, p. 51.

Secretary and myself, never even heard of, until too late, the midnight horrors in my brother-prisoner's lonely cell. It was with a clear realization that this must be the case, that, after as well as before our arrival in Tullamore, I sent message after message entreating my friend not to push his protest to any dangerous extreme until the experiment in my own case had been once for all tried to a finish. The one unkindness (very likely intended for kindness), with which my memory charges the prison staff is that they (including even Father M'Alroy) studiously kept me uninformed as to what was happening to Mandeville. Their report was that, after a formal protest, he had submitted to the prison rules, and that all was going well. The truth, disclosed for the first time at the inquest on his body, is that Dr. Barr, who, for State reasons, discountenanced any action against myself, even when I confronted him in the garments introduced to the prison in open defiance of the law, sanctioned and instigated a series of brutal assaults and punishments as against Mandeville, and rebuked and even threatened the prison doctor for showing any squeamish hesitations. For the first month of the sentence, Dr. Ridley revolted against the unnatural duty imposed upon him. The unhappy Doctor now yielded to Dr. Barr the submission which cost himself as well as his prisoner their lives. In the middle of the night four warders, under the direction of the Governor, broke into Mandeville's cell, flung him on the ground, tore his clothes from his back after a struggle which his herculean strength makes it easy to conceive, and left him naked and bedless on the flags during the icy hours of a mid-winter night. Even after he was tortured into yielding to irresistible force on this point, he was tortured all the more because he held out against the other two degradations of performing servile prison offices and being associated with

criminals ; was condemned to sentence after sentence of bread and water in a punishment cell in the sort of solitary confinement which for most men spells death or madness ; and when he finally left the prison, struggled through the remaining months of his life a doomed and broken man. His widow's evidence revealing his confidences to her " as between man and wife " deserves to live as one of the most moving pages in a national history for ages soaked with tears and blood.

" She had known him since his boyhood and had always looked on him as the strongest man she ever knew. He came home from Tullamore, pale and thin, his lips blue, sore throat, and a cough always with him, his eyesight ruined, unable to walk or to write for the first month after his release ; his throat so sore that he could not eat the brown bread nor take the cold water which was the punishment diet. He told me that one of the Tang prisoners gave him a rope, that he tied it around his waist, and as he suffered more and more from hunger he tightened the rope. He told me that after punishment he could not eat for some days. He told me a warder was eating a meal outside the cell, and when he had done he opened the door and threw him in a tiny bit of meat, as he might throw to a dog, and he said he never enjoyed anything so much in his life. His mind wandered, and he said he prayed to God that he might die rather than that he should go mad."

There was only one thing more revolting than the facts : it was that the police were instructed to threaten the young widow with imputations of drunkenness against her husband if she should give her evidence, and that although the Crown counsel shrank from making the slightest attempt to justify the threat on cross-examination, the Chief Secretary stooped to repeat the insinuation in Glasgow, declaring in words little short of horrifying : " I see nothing but

what is comic in the whole proceedings." Such was the tone of frisky horseplay chosen to soothe the feelings of a young widow whose husband, according to the verdict of a coroner's jury, carefully selected by the police, "died of diffused cellular inflammation of the throat brought about by the brutal and unjustifiable treatment he received in Tullamore Jail."

The evidence which moved the mirth of Mr. Balfour so preyed upon the mind of his humble subordinate, that Dr. Ridley was found dead in his bedroom, with his throat cut, at the hotel where he stayed while awaiting his own turn for examination at the Mandeville inquest. At the subsequent inquest on Ridley's own remains, it was made clear, and clearest of all by Dr. Barr's confessions, that his death was due to cruel official pressure to compel the timid prison doctor, nervous for the fate of "his wife and family and his few ha'pence," to give the orders against which his natural instincts, and even his sense of professional duty, rebelled. The Chief Secretary, who never rebuked his police directors for endeavour-int to terrorise Mrs. Mandeville into suppressing her evidence by threats of defamatory disclosures—as it happened, as false as they were heartless—respecting her husband's private life, had the impudence later to charge Dr. Ridley's death to "a conspiracy of the Irish Party to blacken his character." Whoever reads the evidence at the inquest will discover, on the contrary, that it was the testimony of the members of Parliament the unfortunate prison doctor was forced to maltreat, which placed his personal character in the most attractive light, and it was the principal official witness, Dr. Barr, who exposed the dead man's professional reputation to obloquy, and enabled his chief at an Unionist demonstration in Glasgow to make the atrocious charge that "Messrs. O'Brien and Co. had found two ready tools in the shape of

two doctors.”¹ A few extracts from the depositions of the Nationalist witnesses will have to suffice: “It seemed to me that from the first moment I saw him,” my own evidence mentioned, “several days before Dr. Moorehead” (who was the chief object of Dublin Castle calumny) “had come upon the scene at all, that Dr. Ridley was very wretched about the business. We had fifty different chats about the matter. He generally commenced by throwing up his arms and saying: ‘My God, why did they ever send you here? Why did they put it upon us?’ Dr. Ridley used to say with a great deal of feeling: ‘It is monstrous and unnatural to be treating you like this, but what can I do?’ ‘I have a wife and family, and I have to earn my few ha’pence,’ was an expression that he often used. I confess the wretchedness of everybody around was an aggravation of my own feeling. I told him again and again not to be alarmed on my account—that I wanted no favour, and could accept none—that so far as I could judge, I could get on very well on bread and water, and that whatever happened I could not blame him. It seemed to me that he was a kind, conscientious and skilful man, but decidedly a weak and nervous man. Every official seemed to be under a superstitious terror of the power in Dublin—whether the Board or Mr. Balfour—they so suspected one another.”

Mr. William J. Lane, M.P., a merchant of high standing in Cork, gave the following testimony of

¹ The second of the doctors thus traduced was Dr. Moorehead, who was never forgiven for being the first to break the silence reckoned upon when Mandeville and myself were transferred to Tullamore. Dr. Moorehead’s reports were the principal means of baffling the prison policy divulged to Mr. Blunt at Clouds, and the verdict of the Unionist jury at the Ridley inquest declaring these reports to be as incontestably true as they were courageous was the cutting answer to Mr. Balfour’s malicious libel.

his experiences, under which his own well-balanced mind subsequently gave way :

“ It is not in the power of the Prisons Board to injure him now, and as the Government are trying to shield themselves by traducing his memory, I have no hesitation in telling your jury what I told my friends after I came out of prison. When Dr. Ridley saw me sinking so rapidly he said he could not give me exercise (except with ordinary criminals) but he would give me food. On the following days he brought me some roast fowl, and on Friday he brought me three poached eggs ‘ to keep the life in you,’ as he said himself. Finally when I became so prostrate that I could not rise off the flags, he said, ‘ I must either defy the Prisons Board or have an inquest on you, and I don’t want a verdict against myself for killing you, I will give you exercise in spite of them’ . . . I went out twice that day, and on the forenoon, not being able to walk, I was given a stool in the yard. In the forenoon of the second day, Dr. Ridley came to my cell in a most excited state. He said that ‘ he had got a terrible reprimand from Dublin ’ for allowing me out to exercise, that ‘ he had orders to certify that I was fit for punishment,’ that the resident magistrate was to be brought in, and I was to be put into the punishment dungeon, which would certainly kill me in the condition I was then, and he asked me to go to hospital as the only way to escape them. . . . ” I believe I owe my life to the way he protected me from punishment all the time he was there. He told me he refused to be present at the forcible stripping of Mr. O’Brien which he reported would imperil his life. . . . Dr. Ridley was a sensitive and kindhearted man, and was disgusted with the brutal discipline he had to administer, and I have not a doubt in my mind but that the unfortunate gentleman committed self-destruction rather than

face the ordeal of admitting that he allowed himself to be bullied by Dr. Barr and the Prisons Board into punishing John Mandeville so severely."

Alderman John Hooper, M.P., editor of the *Cork Daily Herald*, who himself paid the penalty in a long period of blindness and a premature death, was besought by Dr. Ridley to send through him a password to his colleague, Mr. Lane, advising him to go to hospital as the only way of saving his life, and "the recollection of his haggard face, his bent body, doubled up from physical suffering, and his maimed gait, as he limped along the previous day in front of my cell—his friends could scarcely recognise him when he was liberated, so altered was he by his sufferings—soon decided him to give the password."

"The poor Doctor seemed overjoyed and enjoined the most absolute secrecy on me as to the action of the Prisons Board, and but for the unworthy attempt that is being made to represent him as a willing instrument in their hands, I should never have made it public. . . . A kindhearted man, forced to perform official acts that were loathsome to his nature. He more than once informed me that there was not a man in the community, whatever his politics, that approved of my being treated as a common criminal, adding, on one occasion, that none of the numerous justices in the locality could be got to order us punishment, in consequence of which one of Mr. Balfour's Removables had to be called in to do that duty."

So much for "the conspiracy of the Irish Party to blacken Dr. Ridley's character." Compare the temper and spirit of the principal witness for the Crown—"the mysterious doctor" who haunted Dr. Ridley's sleep, and who now censured him even in his coffin. Here is a brief extract from the cross-examination of Dr. Barr, setting out with his quite serious statement on oath :

"I am decidedly of opinion that if Mandeville had two years' imprisonment instead of two months, he would be alive and well in Tullamore prison to-day."

"You said that a slight attack of diarrhœa did not disqualify him from punishment? I say so now."

"You said so then? I daresay I did."

"You said it was not within the doctor's right to keep him off punishment if the prisoner was able to bear it? I say so still."

"Did you say that the doctor had been too lenient? Yes."

"You don't believe Dr. Ronayne's evidence? No."

"You consider that all untrue and false? Yes."

"Unfounded? Yes, and I stated as much about Dr. Moorehead's evidence."

"You say that with the treatment his death lay at the door of the doctors? I consider he didn't get a chance for his life."

"In addition to accusing a number of gentlemen of absolute falsehood, you accuse these gentlemen of absolute incapacity? I do."

"Did you say to any gentleman in Liverpool that Mandeville was a great scoundrel and deserved what he got? No. I may have used words to that effect."

"Did you say you did use them? I did not. I may have used them, but I have no recollection."

The "great scoundrel who deserved what he got," and who would have been all the better for twenty-two months more of a *régime* of naked exposure on the flags in a mid-winter night, and of punishment diet prolonged until he had to tighten a rope around his loins to lessen the pangs of starvation, was, as it happened, a man of social standing at least as unimpeachable as Dr. Barr's own, and was described in the evidence of Captain Fetherstonehaugh, the

Governor, as "a patient and courteous gentleman." In conformity with his rule of government, which was to throw over lenient officials and make the cause of all his over-zealous subalterns his own, the Chief Secretary made no scruple in his speech of translating the truculence of Dr. Barr into his own airy persiflage. He chaffed Mandeville and his friends on their lack of humour in "supposing that Irish independence was to be gained by living three weeks without changing one's shirt," re-echoed the libels of his Orange Unionist emissary upon Dr. Ridley's faintheartedness as well as upon the perjury and incapacity of the only independent doctors concerned in Mandeville's treatment, and declined to pay the tribute of one word of honest sorrow for the fate of his own poor prison practitioner, who was sacrificed to the barbarous prison policy which he was presently to run away from himself.

The police took special pains to exclude all but two Nationalists from the Coroner's jury that investigated the Ridley case. In spite of all official precautions their verdict was :

"That Dr. James Ridley died on the 20th July, 1888, at Fermoy, from wounds inflicted by his own hand, with a razor, on the same day, whilst labouring under temporary insanity produced by the apprehension of disclosures at the Mitchelstown inquest, and that he was compelled to act in his official capacity in contravention of his own humane and considerate views. We beg to add our expressions of deep sympathy with Mrs. Ridley and Mrs. Mandeville in their affliction. We condemn the reckless and unfounded charges made by Dr. Barr against the medical men and poor Mr. Mandeville. We are of opinion that the charges made against Dr. Moorehead are absolutely unfounded, and that his reports and visits had a beneficial effect."

Mr. Balfour's pretty wit might still flutter for a

while in airy' contempt for the common human feelings of jurors even thus cautiously selected, but it is scarcely possible he can have been altogether unaware, even before the British electors began to return rude verdicts of their own, that the censures went further and higher than "the mysterious Doctor" from the Kirkdale Unionist Association, whose mission to Ireland was only immediately responsible for the double tragedy above narrated.

CHAPTER XXI

ROME AND IRELAND

(1888)

“ The Midnight Meeting ” at Woodford, in the Clanricarde country, created an amount of enthusiasm in Ireland, and even Britain, and of chagrin in Dublin Castle, of which it would not be easy now to give any notion. It was the first time the device was tried, and it was tried with conspicuous success. The Dublin Castle people who had “ proclaimed ” the tenants’ meeting concentrated all their force of cavalry and police at the neighbouring towns of Ballinasloe and Loughrea, through one or the other of which I was expected to approach. To the bemusement of all their plans, we swooped down from the county Clare, over the shoulder of Slieve Aughty ; as our vedettes signalled our approach, bonfires were set alight until the worthy Englishmen accompanying us began to apprehend they had stumbled into a country afire with red rebellion ; in presence of an enormous midnight gathering, amidst which the handful of policemen left in the village tossed like sheep caught in a torrent, I burned the Lord Lieutenant’s Proclamation, with some remarks appropriate to the *auto-da-fé* ; and when the Chief Secretary’s horse and foot marched in the next day from every part of the compass except the right one, it was to be received with shouts of Homeric laughter more insupportable than if they were volleys of musketry. Our way of meeting systematic savage repression was systematically to defy it, all the time

and everywhere, by every honest weapon at hand, and to prove that it could be baffled, worn down, and—better even than defeated with Mitchelstown black-thorns—laughed out of Court; and with a little ingenuity we never found much difficulty in turning the laugh against the enemy, and making a “suppressed” meeting a greater popular exhilaration than a dozen unmolested ones.¹

¹ With a slight change of plan the surprise of Woodford was played off no less successfully elsewhere. A Peep-of-Day meeting on the Ponsonby estate at Youghal was the next experiment, and the Coercionists, elaborately prepared for a repetition of the midnight meeting, had wearily taken to their beds when the “suppressed” meeting was assembling at the dawn. All was peace after a torch-light procession in Cork upon my arrival from Dublin, when by devious ways the long journey to Youghal was accomplished in the night; the tenantry were found assembled in the Town Hall, with not a policeman or soldier stirring; our meeting over, an early Mass attended, breakfast consumed, and all arrangements made for our counterplot against Captain Plunkett’s armed suppression of free speech in the afternoon, I threw myself on the bed and for two hours before the doubtless bloody drama of the afternoon was to begin slept a divinely dreamless sleep which it would have taken a roll of musketry at my ear to interrupt. Our plan was the audacious one of getting a Nationalist Justice of the Peace, Dr. Ronayne, to issue a counter-proclamation, in very much the same words as the official one, denouncing Captain Plunkett’s proclamation as a wicked and wanton disturbance of the public peace, and warning all concerned at their perils not to proceed with their invasion of the people’s liberties. When the two sets of proclamation-mongers met, I found a file of soldiers’ bayonets pressed within an inch or two of my breast, while the police were ruthlessly bludgeoning every civilian beside or behind me *except* myself. Enraged at this treatment the multitude surged irresistibly forward, and Captain Plunkett in a panic was rushing to the head of the military with an order to fire, when the blow of a hurley on the head laid him prostrate on the pavement. There was no longer any civil authority left to give the order for a massacre, and the people were saved, but it was at the expense of a wound which proved mortal to the unfortunate author of the historic telegram: “Do not hesitate to shoot.” Dublin Castle’s puny revenge was to deprive Dr. Ronayne of the Commission of the Peace; but even here I had the good luck to counter them by recovering £100

"The Midnight Meeting" was for me memorable, among other things, for my first intimate acquaintance with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, an English aristocrat, who threw himself into the Clanricarde struggle with the chivalry—say, if you please, the quixotry—of a Paladin in the *Chant de Roland*. He was now to atone by long months of a spiteful persecution in prison for arousing the wrath of the celestial minds in power in Dublin Castle, and for my own wickedness in burning the Viceregal Proclamation at which he was a mere looker-on without the smallest foreknowledge of my intention. Physically, Blunt bore a considerable likeness to Parnell, but his limbs were larger, his features were heavier and less concentrated, and his was a much more abundant mane of tawny hair and flowing beard: he altogether inspired the same notion of generous strength as a shaggy hound of magnificent proportions, with the eyes of a poet. He had been one of Mr. Balfour's social intimates, and, curiously enough, had first visited the Clanricarde estate as a boy as the guest of the late Marquis in his stately castle at Portumna. The circumstance which vastly increased both the heroism and the suffering of his present crusade was that his interview with Mr. Balfour at Cloude gave him a clear vision of what was before him in Irish prisons. Above all, he must have known that the imprisonment which to an Irishman was the highest of civic honours, sentenced the English aristocrat to a boycott among his own set in his own country, immeasurably more cruel than prison bolts or humiliations could make his experiences in Ireland.

It was on this occasion also Wilfrid Blunt came first to know the man who, not unnaturally, fastened

damages in an action for libel against their local organ of "law and order," and, a sorer business still, devoting the money to helping to raise a bronze statue of John Mandeville on the Square of Mitchelstown.

upon his imagination as the most adorable of Irishmen. Elsewhere¹ I have borne witness to the greatness of the Bishop of Clonfert. The unique thing about Dr. Duggan's influence is that it owed nothing to any of the usual ways and means of celebrity. It was true of him, as of the great soldier of whom it was written, that "he didn't advertise." You will search the newspapers in vain for any trace of his greatness. He made no public speeches, even while the excitement of the revolutionary platform was most contagious. He paid no assiduous court to leaders, whether ecclesiastics or laymen. He was frequently—perhaps, most frequently—an absentee from the meetings of the Bishops, even from those at which the evolution from the predominance of Cardinal M'Cabe's Whiggery to the bold democracy of Archbishop Croke and of Archbishop Walsh was gradually asserting itself. It is doubtful whether he ever personally met Parnell. It is certain that he never encumbered him with his written counsels. What then is the secret of a truth which will startle most of his contemporaries outside the bounds of his own diocese, and can be confirmed only by the few familiar with the inner mechanism of the Land League Revolution—a truth which is none the less one of the mainsprings of Irish contemporary history—that Dr. Duggan's influence over his generation surpassed that of any layman except Parnell, and of any ecclesiastic except Dr. Croke?

A secret to some extent it must remain. As well try to explain why the Bishop's private Mass in a shabby house in a back street of Loughrea which was his "Palace" was to those who loved him a more characteristic presentation of the man than if he were enthroned at some high function (as he scarcely

¹ *The Catholic Bulletin*, for January 1919.

ever was) in some Cathedral chancel amidst empurpled hierarchs and resounding harmonies. The real hierarch of his people's worship was the never-to-be forgotten figure at the altar in the bare oratory in the consecrated morning light—erect and broad-shouldered, every inch a man, yet crowned with a sacred halo of silvery hair and suffused with a subduing gentleness in the sweet rising and falling murmur of the Latin prayers—a natural and a supernatural vision of mystery, sanctity and simplicity. Even such was the hidden charm which in his case, as in many another, must for ever veil from the common eye the impenetrable chambers in which the men of thought who move the world often do their deepest work. But, obviously, no mere personal fascination could ever have permeated masses of his countrymen, many of whom had not heard even of his name, had he not possessed, together with the qualities of a large brain and a larger heart, an inborn realisation of his people's wrongs, as they ate into their daily lives, such as even the best informed of politicians could only acquire at second hand, with an accompanying *saeva indignatio* against their tyrants which the politicians might put into sounding words, but could never quite so passionately feel.

No political leader of the first rank resided in the province of Connacht while the Land League was in being. For twenty years after the Land League arose and disappeared, the special historic features which discriminated the case of that forlorn province from the rest of the country were scarcely understood at all east of the Shannon, and, but for Dr. Duggan's heaven-sent cry from the wilderness, might have remained altogether neglected. The case of Connacht was all but as grossly misunderstood in the North and in the South, as it was by English legislators and by Cockney tourists. The Bishop would inveigh with a humour akin to burning scorn

against the flippant ignorance with which the Thackerays and minor book-makers accepted, like parrots, Cromwell's description of Connacht as a barely more endurable alternative to hell. The tourist road ran through the wilds which border the Western Coast in the midst of picturesque blue mountains swarming with beggars, as picturesque but as bare and ragged as their poor patches of mountain soil. The Bishop, from his first outlook on life, knew what a caricature was the Wild West of the Cockney ready-writers. He knew that if the coast section of the province was a waste of giant rocks and chainless seas, the greater part of inland Connacht was a rolling expanse of feeding lands as rich as any in the world, although they contained no painted mountains to gratify the æstheticism of the Titmarshes, no inns to comfort their bellies, and no population in rags to decorate their sketch-books. To Dr. Duggan the beginning and end of the case of Connacht was that, in the designs of nature, it was not a land of famine, but a land of full and plenty: that it was not a congested pauper warren, but the product of an inhuman system of devastation by which, even in his own memory, the population were transported from the magnificent plains of Mayo, Roscommon and Galway, and their rich inheritance transferred to droves of bullocks owned by great graziers and "bullock men" as void of human feeling as their cattle.

The remedy was as plain as the disease: to undo the work of the Famine Clearances and repeople the lonely plains of inland Connacht with "the transports" penned up amidst the bogs and crags. When the cry of "the Land for the People" rolled in upon the horizon with the first signs of famine in 1878, that was its obvious meaning for the Bishop and for the Western peasants who thundered it forth. Not so with the founder of the Land League. Much though the Bishop loved Davitt's noble simplicity

of soul, he dismissed with an indulgent smile, for any practical purpose in Connacht, the theories of the Nationalisation of the Land which the Father of the Land League had imbibed from Henry George. The problem was to restore the rich lands to the cultivators starving for lack of them, not to mortgage them away to some abstract State in the interests of some new-fangled counsel of social perfection. Nationalisation of the Land would mean in practice liberating the peasants from the landlords to enslave them to some unknown Dublin Bureaucrats. There was the land, and there were the people, and lo ! the Land League agitation swept over the West, and died down without making any practical contribution to the problem how to bring them together. It was not until twenty years afterwards on the uprise of the United Irish League that the theoreticians' cry of " The Land for the People " was defined with more precision to mean " more land and better land for the people," out of the abundant stores lying everywhere around them under the tooth of the bullocks and their exploiters. From that day forth the battle was won. Under the pressure of a new hurricane from the Wild West, statesmen began to understand ; laws were enacted (although with incredible ineptitude and slowness) to re-colonise the luxuriant plains of Connacht with the landless " transports " ; the doctrines preached with burning tongue by Dr. Duggan before the Congested Districts Board and before the Land League were heard of, became the commonplaces of legislators, who had denounced them as communism and passed their first apostles through the fires of three ruthless Coercion Acts ; sleek Government officials took to personally conducting a new generation of Cockney tourists in their motor-cars to the toy villages and redistributed grass-ranches which but yesterday it was treason and blasphemy to dispute with " the big bullock-men."

When the tremendous truth was at long last made manifest, the grass was growing over the noble old Bishop's grave ; but to Dr. Duggan, more than to any other teacher or even man of action—to his clear vision of the inmost truths of the matter—to the fanatical zeal of his apostolate—to his fearlessness in insisting upon the surgery by which alone the evil could be cut out to its roots—the credit for the liberation of Connacht from the grip of landlordism and big grazierdom is in largest measure due. His friends and his critics would agree in describing him as an extreme man. A biography, no matter from what pious hands, that would conceal the fact would be as little to his taste as temporising always was. He never believed that the deep wounds of Ireland were to be cured by sprinkling them with rose-water. Landlordism was the fount of all the poison of Irish life : landlordism and the rule of England which had fashioned landlordism to her own likeness and subsidised its crimes for purposes of her own. For these two fell powers there could be only one choice. They must go on exterminating or be exterminated. The Bishop would give the last penny in his purse—not always with a perfect discretion—to the poor. With as ready a prodigality he would give the last drop of blood in his veins if *that* would better serve his ancient race.

But no considered judgment of his was a merely rash one. He was no respecter of persons nor of powers. He once fluttered the gentle dovecots of a meeting of the Bishops by denouncing the danger to the faith of Ireland caused by the growing contributions of the great grazing interest to the ranks of the priesthood in the West. " St. Bernard," he declared, in the voice of sweetest courtesy in which he delivered his thunders, " St. Bernard once remarked that when the chalices were of wood, the priests were of gold. Now that our chalices are of

gold, God forbid that our priests should be of fat." "But, my dear lord," remarked one of his Most Reverend Brethren with a twinkle in his eye, "what would you do?" The reply came short and sharp as the report of a pistol in a church: "I would put the priests—and perhaps ourselves—for twelve months upon a diet of Indian meal stirabout." Those who may question whether the permanent interests of religion were served—may not even have been wounded—by plain dealing such as this, would never have understood Dr. Duggan, or his fondness for the true Irish priest as, take him for all in all, the finest product of the Irish soil, and would never have been of much use in bringing to pass the benign revolution which will stand to his immortal credit.

Dr. Duggan's open identification with his people in the Plan of Campaign struggle can only be understood by those who remember that, in his diocese, it was a struggle for the defence of thousands of innocent lives and homes against one of the strangest monsters in recorded history. The mystery of the Marquis of Clanricarde's birth—his insult to his mother's tomb—his desertion of the magnificent Irish estate which supplied him with his wealth—his solitary bachelor life in the Albany in London, shunned in the society of his own order, with scarcely a speaking acquaintance among his peers, on the rare occasions when he visited the House of Lords—the two grotesque passions of money-lending in anonymous chambers in London and roller-skating in a Liverpool rink, which seem alone to have divided possession of his perverse soul with an unslakable thirst for vengeance upon the tenants whom he spent the largest part of his wealth in evicting and hunting to earth for voting against him at a Galway election, all betokened a creature so abnormal that the first duty of a civilised State would have been to put himself

and his affairs in sequestration.¹ This was, nevertheless, the man at whose service the scarcely less mad Government of Dublin Castle placed its soldiers, its police forces, its Coercion laws, its Sheriffs, its Courts of Removable Magistrates, and its High Courts, at an expense to the State probably falling little short of a million pounds sterling, and by their means the vast territory between Loughrea and the Shannon was kept in a fever of semi-suppressed civil war throughout a period of more than twenty years. To complete the justification of men like Dr. Duggan and the confusion of their defamers, the very Law Officers of the Crown were brought to describe as "the devil's work" the campaigns of extermination they themselves subsidised and superintended, and the end was what really amounted to a suppression of the Marquis of Clanricarde by an Act of Parliament all his own, the compulsory seizure of his estates, and eventually—although with such shameful tardiness!—the reinstatement of the tenantry whose extermination the Marquis and the Ministers of England spent an infamous quarter of a century in endeavouring to compass. If it is no longer disputed on which side lay "the devil's work," who can hesitate to assign an archangel's work to the great old Bishop who raised his crozier aloft between his people's cabins and the destroying might of England, and himself sunk into the earth while the issue was still doubtful?

Throughout that long agony, the Bishop's fortitude was the soul of the resistance, and his hospitable poor "Palace" its headquarters. Foremost among the Englishmen who in the course of that life-and-death conflict conquered the Bishop's good-will and were conquered by him was Mr. Shawe-Lefevre (the

¹ That this description is not an exaggerated one, readers of *The Life and Letters of Lady Dorothy Nevill*, chapter VII, by a friendly author who knew Lord Clanricarde well, may easily satisfy themselves.

present Lord Eversley). It is bare justice to say of him, that he was (not even excepting Gladstone, in some respects) the best informed and the most consistently courageous English statesman of his generation in his grasp of Irish affairs. He was also (shame to say) the most ill-requited. Had the small men who construct Cabinets permitted Mr. Shawe-Lefevre to go to the Irish Office in 1893, the contemporary story of Ireland would have been brighter reading. Events have been his justification, as well as the Bishop's, for a courage too often mistaken for folly by the worldly-wise.

One episode of the never-ending battle will illustrate better than any generalities can do both the desperate nature of the conflict and the humour with which the blackest tragedies of Irish life are rendered bearable. The League had been suppressed by a proclamation under the Coercion Act, and the Chief Secretary, Mr. Balfour, made an incautious boast in the House of Commons that in the suppressed area the League was "already a thing of the past." The boast was answered by convening public "monster meetings" of the League at the principal storm centres for the following Sunday. It fell to the part of the present writer to make the answer of Loughrea an unmistakable one. The meeting had no sooner commenced than Mr. Balfour's bayonets and sabres were brought into play to dispose of the thousands of "things of the past" which still required bayonetting. Some English ladies and members of Parliament were hurled off the platform without mercy by the mailed fist, and the writer was finally left the one solitary occupant of the platform, addressing a squadron of Hussars who were drawn up in front, after victoriously chasing the "things of the past" from one field into the next.

Mr. Balfour was silly enough to seek consolation for the refutation of his boast by prosecutions in a

Court, where the sabres of the Hussars could not quite so summarily stifle discussion. His new blunder was made the means of prolonging during several weeks the daily proofs of his powerlessness against the insuppressible League. Mr. Healy and Mr. Bodkin came down to my defence, and their ingenuity did not take long to discover a means of turning Mr. Balfour's portentous legal proceedings into derision and contempt. It was determined to make each and every man of the thousands assembled at the suppressed meeting pass into the witness-box to avow on oath that he came there as a member of the League for the express purpose of "giving Balfour the lie" when he bragged that the League was "a thing of the past." The two unfortunate Removable Magistrates were driven to despair while day passed after day, and the men of parish after parish, in contingents carefully organised, townland by townland, presented themselves as witnesses to demonstrate the universal and defiant activity of the organisation the rash Minister flattered himself that a Proclamation had disposed of. After the country had been entertained for some weeks with the daily spectacle of a Chief Secretary, who was described as a "Plaster-of-Paris Cromwell," confuted, insulted, and ridiculed in his own Coercion Court, the enormous farce was one night brought to an appropriate close by the mysterious disappearance of the many hundreds of depositions the Removable Magistrates had spent so much time in solemnly committing to writing, and the wretched gentlemen's efforts to extricate themselves from their dilemma culminated in the Crown being cast in the entire costs of the prosecution—the abstraction of the depositions and all!

The humours of the trial reached their height every evening around the hospitable board of the Bishop, whose man-of-all-work, "Mike," produced an unending succession of dinners, of the plainest but most

appetising fare, at which the traverser, his counsel, and a goodly company of priests and English visitors were nightly guests, until we began seriously to fear lest the prosecution which kept the country in a roar might not end by bankrupting the Bishop as well as the Coercion Court. Rumours began to circulate that England, baffled and laughed out of Court at Loughrea, had been more successful in Rome in obtaining a condemnation of the Plan of Campaign, before which Lord Clanricarde's "devil's work" was tottering. One evening while the fun around the dinner table was at its top sparkle, a postman's knock resounded at the hall-door outside, and a letter with a foreign superscription was placed in the Bishop's hand. He was sitting at the head of the table, his purple-edged biretta planted as usual at the top of the massive brow, like a banner above a rampart, while he dissected a turkey and distributed the dainty bits with his still daintier little pleasantries among his guests (with him carving was not only a fine art, but a never-failing source of playful wit). He craved the company's leave, while he adjusted his ancient spectacles, examined the outside of the envelope as though it were some curious insect, took a pinch of snuff before he tore it open, and absorbed another and a vaster pinch of snuff as he settled himself to translate its contents, which were in Latin. His guests felt that something portentous had happened. They observed a respectful silence while he slowly, with repeated aid from his snuff-box, mastered the exquisite Latinity of Leo the Thirteenth, preserving all the while an altogether untranslatable countenance himself. He at last broke the silence, embracing the company around the table with a circular glance over the top rim of his spectacles: "Ha, ha, my lads, listen to this!" was what he said, and proceeded to read to us his English version of the Vatican Rescript formally condemning Boycotting and the Plan of Campaign. There ensued

a period of pained silence. "Well, my lord," the traverser at last remarked, "I dare say it is time for us outlaws to clear out of the house where you have made us all so happy." The Bishop took another liberal pinch of snuff, still with the visage of a Sphinx; then, throwing his eye upon his man-of-all-work, who was beginning to wonder what was to happen to the dinner, "Mike," he said, with a solemnity worthy of the Day of General Judgment, "Mike, kill another pig!" Not another word, but if I am not mistaken it was one of the great answers of history.

The Papal Rescript of which we heard the first at the Bishop's dinner-table was a considerable addition to the difficulties of overcoming a powerful Coercion Government; but the blow would have been comparatively slight but for another which befell us a few days after its publication. It was no less than a speech of the Irish Leader at the Eighty Club in London dissociating himself in harsh, and even bitter, terms from the Plan of Campaign, and bringing the most unexpected aid and comfort to its enemies in Ireland, in Britain, and in Rome.¹ That a fulmination from Rome, which was obviously the result of English machinations at the Vatican and of secret consultations in the houses of Irish landlords, should be reinforced by another and a harsher one from the Irish Leader, at a moment when some of the most prominent of his

¹ The banquet in his honour, at which the speech was delivered, was marked by some characteristic traits of Parnell. The company at the National Liberal Club, including Earl Spencer, who was to preside, and most of the *sommités* of the Liberal Party, were kept cooling their heels for an unconscionable time after the hour named for the Dinner. When they were beginning to doubt whether the guest would arrive at all, Parnell sailed in with superb ease, graciously bestowing his bows among the indignant great people, without the smallest semblance of a consciousness that anything unusual had been happening. It is curious to note that his speech created more dismay among his hosts of the Eighty Club than it did in Ireland.

colleagues and thousands of his countrymen were wrestling for their lives against the might of England was a phenomenon so painful that even the faintest show of disloyalty among Parnell's lieutenants at the moment might have led to dangerous manifestations of Irish feeling. Happily, his long absence from Ireland had diminished the importance of a rare and obviously ill-informed interference in the home struggle, and both crises were surmounted with signal dignity, self-restraint, and moderation by the Irish people.

For the first time (and the last time) in my life it must be owned I was really angry with Parnell and lost not a moment in telling him so in London. It was easy to see that the Eighty Club speech was one of the mistakes engendered by his growing isolation from his own colleagues and from free English Liberal opinion as well. Also, there was a pallor upon his worn cheeks which told its own tale. He discussed the situation with the charm and tolerance which were never missing from his private consultations. Only once was his brow at all clouded, when he hinted that his speech was not at all aimed at me—a suspicion which, indeed, had never for a moment crossed my mind—but at two of our colleagues whom he now seldom named without a certain suspiciousness ; but he did not return to the subject after I had pointed out that one of the two had not as much to do with the real guidance of the Plan of Campaign struggle as public appearances might suggest and that the other had never participated in it at all save as a friendly outsider, and might with a little less unkindness on Parnell's own part have been easily preserved as a friend—one whom nature formed of soft and impressionable material on the emotional side as well as of the finest steel as a Parliamentary swordsman. I once more recalled that if we had not consulted him in detail concerning the Plan of Campaign

it was because we took it for granted that, as in the case of the resistance to the three years' Coercion Act of Lord Spencer, he would prefer, as the supreme power in the background, to hold himself aloof from responsibility for somewhat desperate courses, while absolutely free, so far as we were concerned, either to disown us if we were beaten or to utilise for the country any advantage these desperate courses might be the means of achieving; that in the only definite advice he had offered—viz., as to restricting the area of the Plan of Campaign—we had conformed rigidly to our undertaking with him even at the expense of doubling the difficulties of winning within a space so circumscribed; and that his original apprehension that British opinion might be estranged could scarcely with any reason survive now, when the Plan of Campaign struggle in Ireland and its protagonists were the supreme attractions of Liberal platforms.¹

¹ Perhaps the most picturesque of my own experiences in the "Union of Hearts" days was a miners' gala in the midst of the Welsh mountains at Blaenau Festiniog, where I attended with Mr. Tom Ellis, the all-too-soon forgotten "Parnell of Wales," to address his constituents. The enthusiasm of these ten or fifteen thousand brother Celts of the mountains had something of the mysterious thrill of wizardry. They cheered the Irish Rebel's speech perhaps even more ardently than if the most of them understood a word of English, and with their wondrous gift of pennillion singing, the entire multitude sang "God Save Ireland" in Welsh in a roar of measured harmony of which I never heard the like at home. But the white stone with which the evening is marked in my memory was my first meeting with Mr. Lloyd George. He was then a practising solicitor in the neighbouring town of Carnarvon and was in training as a candidate for the Burghs at the next election. Even then a quite manifest *arriviste*, the flowing yellowish hair of a poet, a small man, yet with the square shoulders of one who could set his back to the wall, a certain calculating keenness of an attorney in growing practice, but above all an eye of marvellous brightness which threw all other features into the background, an eye flashing with poetry or personal magnetism or, it might be, with a business-like attention to the future—in any case, already a man of mark whose speech in English was not specially remarkable, but whose

I was more profoundly convinced now than ever (I told him) that he was entitled to say of Ireland what Pitt had once said of England: "I can save the country and no other man can." ("That," Parnell interjected, with a smile, "was a rather cheeky observation on Pitt's part," adding with a grave face: "but there are times when there may be some foundations of truth in such sayings.") He had only to say the word, and the Plan of Campaign would cease from troubling; but he must take the responsibility of making up his mind one way or the other. If his speech meant any relaxation of our activities at this stage, it would mean the ruin of the evicted tenants who had trusted us, and I had made up my mind that, rather than change our attitude one jot, I must give up my connection with *United Ireland* and leave him free to give its policy any new direction he chose. "Good gracious, what an idea!" was his comment. "My dear O'Brien, so far from thinking of anything like that, I have a proposal to make to you which will make you a bigger man in the country than even *United Ireland* can make you." He then mentioned that he had been authorised by Mrs. Gray to offer me the Managing Editorship of the *Freeman's Journal*. Her husband, Edmund Dwyer Gray, who had died a few months before, was one of the three most capable Irishmen of his generation. Widely though his early death was mourned, the country hardly half realised all it had lost. Parnell urged in more than generous terms that, in the era of national freedom which must come in a year or two, the control of that great journal would bring with it an influence in the country's future which no weekly paper, however powerful, could permanently ensure. Under other circumstances, was my reply, the offer would have been an speech in Welsh threw his Celtic listeners into raptures in which, I am afraid, the honest plainness of the modest "Parnell of Wales" was rather forgotten.

irresistible one ; but, having regard to the vastness of the property at stake, it would be criminal to run the extreme risks of suppression which *United Ireland* had to take at every publication, and, until the Campaign estates were safe, it would not be possible for me to abate these risks or lower the fighting flag of any paper under my direction.

But the day was won. Parnell changed his front with a rapidity of insight which the few who really knew him were not in the least likely to mistake for weakness. "Oh, yes, you have done astonishingly well," he said, in his calm way. "The Pope won't matter. Balfour is pretty well licked. If Dillon and you go to America, you will bring back no end of money." And he straightway consented to call a meeting of the Party to protest against the Papal Rescript, only stipulating that he, as a Protestant, must not be asked to participate. He published an interview in the *New York World* in which he said : "I am bound to say that the people have resisted Coercion with a firmness beyond all my expectations. To this firmness I attribute the complete breakdown of Coercion." To end any possible misconstruction of the Eighty Club speech, he invited the prosecuted members of the Party to a banquet at the Café Royal, where he himself made a sympathetic speech and left no doubt that it was with his entire approval the Party were summoned to the Dublin Mansion House to deal with the interference from Rome.

Mr. Sexton, who was the Lord Mayor of Dublin of the year, presided at the Party Meeting in the Mansion House. He preserved a temperamental mutism as to any views of his own upon a particularly thorny subject, and confined himself to the statement that he was ready to hear any gentleman who had a suggestion to offer. The mutism proved contagious ; nobody cared to be the first to break silence. The pause was becoming painful when Matt Harris, the

member for East Galway, with the solemnity of a Lord Chief Justice in a full-bottomed wig, rose to make this observation: "Well, Mr. Chairman, I suppose we have nothing to do here except to pass two resolutions—one to endorse the Plan of Campaign, and the other to endorse Boycotting" (these being the two specific practices condemned by the Rescript). The general tension found relief in a roar of laughter. "Don't you think, Mr. Harris," the Lord Mayor suggested, slyly, "that that would be a little hard on our friends, the Bishops?" Our Lord Chief Justice shook a wise, white head, and, with an indescribable gravity, replied: "I know them Bishops, Mr. Chairman, for a matter of forty years in Irish politics, and believe me, the Bishops are a bad lot!" This, to Matt's mind, proposition of obvious good sense was hailed with a burst of irreverent merriment which greatly scandalised the old man, but succeeded at once in bringing the meeting to business.¹ The Party

¹ Matt once threw the House of Commons into convulsions with a denunciation of the odious system of police "shadowing." "Why, Mr. Speaker, I can't go into my church to adore my God, but I have one of those fellows poisoning the place around me—I can't drop in to a neighbour for a glass of grog—I can't go to bury a friend or to have any other amusement in life"—the rest being lost to history in shrieks of laughter which the orator did not fail severely to reprehend. But occasional drolleries of this kind were but the outer rind of a character of sound sense and irreproachable patriotism. Some writings of Mr. Harris giving his reasons for opposing the nationalisation of the land in Ireland read before the Parnell Commission by Sir Henry James wrung from the eminent counsel for *The Times* the tribute that they were among the finest pieces of English prose and of solid thinking he had ever laid his eyes on. From the day I first saw Matt Harris majestically presiding over a Congress of the Irish Republic at the City Mansion Hotel, Dublin, in 1870 to the day I saw his coffin lowered to its last resting-place in Ballinasloe, no act or word unworthy of a Christian patriot and a gentleman ever darkened his name. Other Bishops might be politically "a bad lot," but Bishop Duggan was Matt's fastest friend and worshipped mascot.

Meeting resulted in a declaration of Ireland's rights in temporal affairs, so firm as to make those apprehensive of a priest-ridden Ireland lift their eyebrows in amaze, and yet so conformable with Catholic doctrine that, before many months were over, the Irish Bishops received a fresh circular from Propaganda substantially cancelling the first.¹

It remains only to add that subsequent legislation proved that, while the *thesis* of the Vatican Rescript was, of course, for Catholics unassailable, the ground on which the principle was made applicable in the particular case—the *hypothesis* which took it for granted that the injustice of the Irish Land Laws had already been once for all remedied—was discovered to be so unsustainable, that the traverser who was the Bishop's guest that night at

¹ How easily a coach-and-four was in actual practice driven through the decree of Propaganda may be judged from an experience of mine with one of the simplest of Irish rustic priests, Father O'Regan, of Freemount, whose heart was even bigger than his magnificent frame. A few days after the publication of the Rescript he wrote imploring me to go down to strengthen the trembling knees of the tenants of the Currass Estate, who were marked down for wholesale eviction. I found the poor man in a pitiful state of alarm, but indomitably resolved to take his stand by his people, be the consequences what they might. He insisted on presiding at our meeting, but with tears in his eyes warned me: "You will have my life in your hands to-day. If you say one word about the Plan of Campaign, I am a dead man. Of course, you know, you may say as much as you like about *the Plan*." "It's a bargain, Father O'Regan," I whispered, as I launched out into a furious phillipic in defence of the Plan. "Well, Father O'Regan," I remarked with some trepidation after I had finished, "I hope I have been as good as my word." "My dear friend," he cried embracing me in the hug of a bear, "you have saved the situation. Nothing could have been more diplomatic. Come in to your dinner and we'll drink your health." The eviction campaign was abandoned. And profound is my faith that the gallant Irish priest who went to his reward many a year ago, found that the Recording Angel had blotted out the little black mark as to his casuistry in tears of joy for the saving of his people.

Loughrea, had the happiness more than twenty years afterwards of being welcomed with a singular favour in the private audience chamber of the Vatican by the great Pope Leo, who had come to realise (and to say) that it took the sufferings of *braves lutteurs* in all the intervening years to deliver the world from the devilry of the Lord Clanricardes and make the self-immolation of the Bishop Duggans an immortal memory for their race.

A layman can touch only with the utmost nicety a fact which cannot, however, be ignored. The appointment of a Coadjutor Bishop *cum jure successionis* is, in almost all circumstances, one of the most searching anxieties which the Bishop of a small and poor Diocese can be called upon to endure in his declining years. The trial was in Dr. Duggan's case all the more severe that his successor in the actual control of the Diocese, although a churchman of commanding intellect, was the antithesis in politics of the principles rooted deeply in the old Bishop's heart, and had not the gift of softening differences of judgment by a temper in any remarkable degree sympathetic or deferential. The old man's last days were not exempt from suffering of the sort least bearable to a sensitive soul; but even those admitted to the inner sanctuary of his thoughts could discover no trace of bitterness, or even of audible complaint. "He died and made no sign," with the resignation of a great Christian, and with the dignity of a gentleman as noble as any born in the purple.

To the last, he held unflinchingly true to his faith in the Irish people and in the inexorable victory which he was not destined with his own eyes to see. A few days before the Bishop's death, the present writer had the privilege of a singularly fascinating conversation with him at the Convent of the Vincentians at Phibsborough. The burden of his thoughts lay as usual with the destruction of landlordism to its roots, as

the first condition of social, economic, or political regeneration, and for the means he knew no better than the untamable spirit of the frieze-clad captains whom he had seen face the odds without a quaver throughout a twenty years semi-civil war in old Loughrea. As he struggled to the outer gate to bid me good-bye, his last words were: "Never fall out with the extreme men. They are called extreme because they are extremely in the right." Indulgent critics—nay, the most severely just ones—may, perhaps, forgive the mention of another episode of this last interview. The Bishop mentioned that he had just been re-reading *When We were Boys*, with feelings he was pleased to describe as delight, and he was more surprised than ever how anybody who really read the book could have read into it antipathy to the Irish priestly order, much less to the faith of Ireland. Had the Bishop been fated to live a little longer, he would have learnt that Cardinal Manning, in his private Diary, formed precisely the same judgment of a book which has been described as "the longest lived and best abused of Irish novels," and that the reaction in a new generation has already reached a pitch at which a new edition is at this moment passing through the Press with a phenomenal success after ignorance or injustice has been doing its worst for all but thirty years.

So it has been with all the Irish ideals Bishop Duggan lived and died for. Misunderstanding, calumny, persecution for dreary years, followed by the inevitable vindication of the persecuted, even though it was not given to his mortal ears to hear the shouts of victory. The landlordism against which he took up his parable has died the death with the assent of its own most enlightened battle champions. His "communistic" theories which would make the people and not the bullocks the possessors of the fatness of the lands of Connacht have been pro-

nounced by Governments and legislators to be the most obvious human truths. His trust in the broadest measure of freedom of opinion for the common people no man will now gainsay. It would be as impossible at this time of day to change the judgment of educated men in respect of the brave thinking, superb daring, and personal sanctity of Dr. Duggan, as it would be to turn back the tide of fifty tumultuous years in order to re-establish the state of things when a man of the Judge Keogh type was the reigning model of statesmanship and virtue and the golden-hearted Bishop of Clonfert stood in the dock as his prisoner.

CHAPTER XXII

AN APPEAL TO CÆSAR

(1889)

Mr. Balfour's prognostications (which were also Mr. Morley's) as to the trend of British opinion, had by this time completely come to grief. So far from England being scandalised by the Plan of Campaign, the conspirators who took the most active part in that technically illegal but essentially righteous struggle were those who were most in demand on English platforms. Mr. Balfour based the success of his Irish policy on the plan of picking out a few leaders for extinction, either by sheer barbarity or by holding up to ridicule those who were not to be frightened, and lo ! the victims of his prison policy were rising up against him at every bye-election, and the flouts and jeers with which he endeavoured to laugh down the verdicts of coroners' juries were beginning to arouse more indignation than laughter even amongst his own audiences. It was a result as little expected as that of the bite of the mad dog in Goldsmith's poem. He might still have saved his credit by frankly admitting the Campaign tenants to the relief provided by the Act won by their sacrifices and silently dropping his unlucky fad of prison terrorism. He did neither the one thing nor the other. He exerted his eloquence to incite the landlords to make examples of the Campaign estates, by exterminating their population. declaring that "if he were an Irish landlord he would sooner beg his bread than yield to the Plan of Campaign"—even to a Plan of Campaign to which

he had himself so far yielded as to inscribe its demands upon the Statute Book—and his prison policy grew to be a mass of incredible inconsistencies, concessions and reactions wavering on this side or on that as the pressure of the Unionist Whips relaxed or became more insistent.

In the matter of all others on which recent experiences ought to have put him on his guard, he now marred the grace of a surrender which he might well have seen to be inevitable, by a folly to which circumstances—no doubt with some injustice, but according to all the evidence available to plain people—gave an ugly aspect of personal vindictiveness.

It need not, of course be suspected that the Carrick-on-Suir prosecution was fixed, except by some meddling subordinate, with any view to making it impossible for me to fulfil my engagement to speak at a great meeting in Mr. Balfour's constituency of East Manchester three days after my quite certain conviction; but even an Olympic who claimed to be "a child in these matters" might well have been warned by the coincidence to pay some attention to what subsequently occurred. At any rate, it can be affirmed without reservation that any thought of being in a position to attend the meeting at the Hulme Town Hall was as remote from my mind the morning of the Carrick trial as any intention of preventing me could have been from Mr. Balfour's.

The trial before the two Removable magistrates at Carrick was of the now commonplace pattern—access to the Courthouse barred by cordons of armed policemen; traverser, his counsel, and his brother members of Parliament forced to make their way through a baton charge, and a retaliatory shower of paving stones before the proceedings could even commence; and then for many hours the dreary formalities of a "trial" in which everything, including the sentence, was a mere rehearsal, to which even

the diamond wit of my advocate, Mr. Healy, failed to impart any vitality, It was probably boredom, and not any deeper design, that suddenly inspired Mr. Healy to take advantage of some peculiarly atrocious piece of Jedwood justice to throw up his brief and announce that he would quit the Court. His action was in no way pre-arranged. Neither had I myself any purpose except to bring the farce to a summary end, when I took up my hat and announced that I would follow his example. According to the strict letter of the law I was not a prisoner until the sentence had been pronounced. It was, therefore, not the traverser, but the Removable Magistrates who were the law-breakers when they screamed "Don't let him out." So was a frightened sergeant of police when he obeyed their order by grasping me by the throat, and as he afterwards pathetically claimed "grabbed the full of my fist of his shirt collar," in the encounter. Frank Mandeville, a son of Anak, like his brother, interposed his bulk between the sergeant and myself, and by sheer dead-weight reduced him to inaction. In the confusion of the moment, the police guard at the entrance, having seen me pass in and out freely during the day, stood obsequiously aside while I quitted the Courthouse. As I walked up the Main street, with no particular destination, a body of policemen came charging down the street towards me, driving a crowd in front of them. I walked straight ahead into the charging line. A policeman had his clubbed carbine raised to fell me, when at my cry : "What do you mean ?" he recognized me, and having no notion of what had occurred, he dropped the lifted carbine, and rejoined his comrades in charging down the street, leaving me high and dry in the now empty street behind them. A young Irish-American darted out of a side street, and thrust me into a neighbouring shop, and in an instant that part of the town became as silent as a cemetery.

For the first time, the thought of an escape presented itself to me. By good luck my hostess turned out to be a fanatical friend, a Miss O'Neill, who proceeded to dictate the arrangements with the coolness of a general in the field, and the devotion in which a noble woman never fails. So little had the scene at the Courthouse been prearranged, that I had left my Ulster overcoat at the hotel, and was wearing a top hat which alone must have discovered me out of a wholly top-hatless community. There was not a moment to be lost, if I was to make good my escape from a small town swarming with policemen, and already simmering with excited rumours of my disappearance. The young lady requisitioned the rough headpiece of one of her workmen for me, and throwing a country shawl over her head, calmly marched out into the street, side by side with her dangerous guest, and with the simplicity of genius, passing police patrol after police patrol with a cheery salute, landed me safely on the outskirts of the town in charge of my Irish-American friend, Ryan.

What followed is chiefly worth relating in detail in order to illustrate how wondrously almost every man, woman and child could be relied upon, at a moment's notice by night or day, without counting the risks to themselves, much less without remembering that they were in a position to name their own price for betrayal, to co-operate in the universal National conspiracy which the Chief Secretary airily mistook for a myth invented by half-a-dozen insignificant agitators. Now that the chance had offered, it became an object of real public concern to prove both Ireland's contempt for all the powers of Coercion and her confidence in an appeal to the Cæsar of the British electorate by carrying out the engagement to speak in the heart of Mr. Balfour's own constituency, in spite of the apparently irresistible governmental machinery set in motion to forbid it. Failure would

supply the Chief Secretary with a fresh witticism or two, but success would cover him with the ridicule to which, like most men who say stinging things themselves, he was exquisitely sensitive. That evening, fortified by a dinner at the hospitable board of the parish priest of Ballyneale, Father Robert Power, the young curate of Mullinavat, Father Brennan, proposed to drive me in his pony-trap (as magically ready as all the rest) to his house some twenty miles away in the County Kilkenny on my way to the port of Wexford, which for its distance from Carrick, and its unexpectedness offered the likeliest chance of escape from the shores of Ireland. The night was a bitterly cold and dark one, and the adventure went within a ace of collapsing at its start, for when we had travelled a couple of miles Father Brennan discovered, to his horror, that we had travelled back to the outskirts of Carrick-on-Suir, into the jaws of a now thoroughly awake and infuriated enemy. At Mullinavat, Father Brennan woke up a new magical Geni, a farmer named Fitzgerald, who had a fresh horse tackled nearly as promptly as Aladdin's wonderful lamp could have done it, and arrayed me in an ill-fitting, but snug, frieze coat of his own against the winter blast. Shortly after dawn, I was crossing the railway bridge connecting the two counties, Kilkenny and Wexford, while Fitzgerald drove into New Ross to send out a jaunting car to convey me to Dr. Cardiff's house at Carrickbyrne, half-way towards the town of Wexford. The New Ross jarvey who overtook me when already far on the road instantly recognised me, but with the glowing Celtic face, and the iron shake hands of one more likely to shed the last drop of his blood in defence of the outlaw, than to earn the fee of five hundred pounds he might readily have had for his morning's work, if he had driven

me to the nearest police barrack. In Dr. Cardiff's warm home I slept out the day, plunged in a delicious Lethe, which was always sure to enwrap me in such emergencies, and was only awakened by the Doctor, the largeness of whose heart was fully in proportion to his weight of two and twenty stone, to learn that he had been in communication with Wexford, and that all was ready for our flitting for Wales before midnight.

The Mayor of Wexford (Captain McGuire) who was also an experienced sea-dog, had made the arrangements for smuggling me away by the good sloop "The Glyn" (Captain Bogan) with such discretion that late that night, while the town, and, indeed, the whole country, were buzzing with the story of the Carrick escape, and the Governmental measures for the recapture of the fugitive, I was able to walk out of the Mayor's hospitable dining-room on the Quay straight to the gangway to our gallant craft, and ensconce myself in the excellent rat-hole in which our skipper was accustomed to enjoy his rare repose. In Ireland it would be superfluous to add, our crew of five were quite aware of the nature of their dangerous cargo, and refused to accept a stiver for a voyage which one traitorous word from the least of them might have turned into a humbler Jason's Golden Fleece. The wind played Dublin Castle as false as the mariners. We were blown at a hurricane pace to the Welsh coast, and when the next morning I turned out of my rat-hole after a sleep such as is not always to be had in palaces, it was to find "The Glyn" peacefully anchored at her berth at Porthcawl, where the Customs Officer (an Irishman) and Captain Bogan were discussing, with a relish, the latest news from Ireland, including the betting rate at the moment as to whether the Carrick fugitive would or would not reach Manchester. We landed for an early family dinner with the genial

Welsh landlord of a local inn, who, good man, was far too busy catering for the appetites of his lively brood of little Welshmen to pay much attention to the extraordinary personage presented to him as an apprentice mariner from Wexford. At Captain Bogan's stern demand, I had put my spectacles in my pocket, but even without that unusual equipment for the sea, what with my baker's white hat and farmer's top coat, in whose ample folds my shrunken limbs must have seemed to be hiding for their lives, my pretensions as a sea-dog could not have imposed upon anybody who had not half-a-dozen young ravens about him clamouring to be fed. As it turned out, our host, the Welsh inn-keeper, was an enthusiastic Home Ruler, and could not for many a day forgive our skipper for not taking him into his confidence as to our adventure, which was thenceforth one of the classic sources of entertainment at his ingle-nook. After dinner, the worthy fellow drove us over in his own pony-trap to the neighbouring town of Bridgend, from which I hoped to catch a train for London. In order to part with him without arousing his suspicion, our skipper had to hint at some surreptitious visit to a sweetheart, his or mine, as the object of our visit. I did not, of course, know a soul at Bridgend, and it is characteristic of the universality of the human sentiment, which befriended Mr. Balfour's victims in their loneliest plights, that I sought out the Catholic Presbytery, without knowing even the name of the Rector (as it chanced, an Englishman), but with the sure foreknowledge that, whoever he was, my secret would be safe with him, and there would be welcome and security under his roof. Characteristically, too, of Ireland's mystic fortunes, I was pointed out among the woods over the town the towers of Dunraven Castle, the seat of the lord of the manor, the Earl of Dunraven, who, fifteen years afterwards, was to become a close and honoured colleague of the outlaw

of that day in Bridgend in, perhaps, the nearest approach that ever was made to peace between the two islands.¹

My charming English host, on whose gentle welcome I did not count in vain, had the hardihood to see me off in my extraordinary habiliments by the night train for Paddington. For the two days still to elapse before the Manchester meeting, I made up my mind, since it was impossible to face scrutiny at a London hotel without luggage, and in my fearful and wonderful garb, to take refuge with a life-long Mallow friend, Mrs. Bessie Douglas, of whose romantic devotion to Ireland I had received thousands of the proofs that try the bravest as with fire. It was still long before daylight as I rapped and rang at her house in the West End. I had to rap and ring so often that the policeman on beat sidled up, not without an uneasy glance at my queer figure, and told me they had been notified at the station that the lady was leaving town. He had fortunately moved off, before at last, in response to my activity at the bell-handle, a head was thrust through an upper window with the announcement that Mrs. Douglas was out of town, and a sharp demand what I meant by making all that noise at such an hour of the night? By good fortune I recognised the voice of Mrs. Douglas's chief shop assistant (an English girl) and by still better fortune she recognised mine without forcing me to take that still watchful policeman round the corner into our confidence as to my name. Without another word the true-hearted English girl hurried down to open the door. Mrs.

¹ Lord Dunraven was Chairman of the Land Conference of 1903 which abolished landlordism and a principal personage in the All-for-Ireland League which proposed to abolish English rule in Ireland by the same methods, which were first scoffed at by the Liberal Home Rule Government and their Irish dependents and afterwards eagerly embraced when it was too late.

Douglas was fetched back by the first train from Brighton, and with infinite precautions, one of my most intimate and affectionate colleagues, Tom Gill, was summoned from the House of Commons, and before the day was over had replaced my torn shirt and floury hat, and tumultuous freize coat with West End garments of a taste and cut which were a most effective, although undesigned, disguise for all who might calculate upon my usual sartorial idiosyncrasies.

To get out of London and into Manchester was the next problem, for Tom Gill informed me that every train for the north was closely watched, and the betting mania had introduced a new element of danger, with the result that the odds against my reaching the Hulme Town Hall had reached a pitch which arrayed the two political parties in opposite mobs as excited as amateur bookies on a Derby Day. The difficulty was got over by avoiding all the direct trains for Manchester, which were searched with the eyes of scores of lynxes, and travelling by an entirely unsuspected train to Sheffield, whence toward evening I made my way by a slow local train to Manchester. As anticipated, the vigilance displayed on the arrival of the trains from the South was entirely missing when the uneventful train from Sheffield lumbered in, all the more as I had not acquainted a single person in Manchester with my movements, and the organizers of the Hulme Town Hall Meeting were themselves as puzzled as the police as to what might or might not happen. I knew only one private address in all Manchester—that of an Irishman, Dr. Dixon—and never having been, I think, in the great town before, spent an hour and a half searching a remote suburb before my cabman happened upon the right street. Dr. Dixon had long before left for the Hulme Town Hall, and my watch was already within a few minutes of the hour at which the proceedings were to commence. There

was nothing for it but the desperate resource of flogging the jaded cab horse, and his malediction-mouthing driver back on the dreary road to the place of meeting, with the heart-breaking prospect of stumbling into the meshes of the governmental net all alone, just as every other obstacle had been, with extraordinary good luck, overcome. When after a broken-kneed crawl that seemed to last for an eternity we arrived at the Town Hall, the proceedings of the meeting had been for some time in progress, and their tameness, owing to the suspense at my non-arrival, had probably a reassuring effect which relaxed the tension of the police precautions. However, the entire police force of Manchester, some eight or nine hundred strong, were drawn up in dark masses on the square in front. As the cab pulled up, three or four young men at the platform door peered curiously in, and suddenly, with an unrestrainable cry of joy, whispered: "For God's sake, quick!" At the same moment another group of men in civilian dress, who turned out to be detectives, made a rush for the cab, and at a whistle the whole police battalion got in motion behind us. There was half-a-minute's frantic rush for life, but the young Irishmen had the best of the scuffle. Just as a heavy hand from behind made a grasp at my shoulder with the shout: "I arrest you!" my young countrymen tripped up my captor, and with the velocity of a bullet from a gun, shot me up the platform stairs and into the midst of a vortex of literally delirious enthusiasm such as, excepting the night of the Mallow Election, never before or since so completely overawed me with the mingled majesty and terror of human passion in its hours of sacred madness.

The scene was one of a thousand proofs from the "Union-of-Hearts" days that, the right chord once struck, the English race is more passionately stirred by sentiment than our own (for, of course, three-fourths

of the audience must have been English). Had a chain of purely accidental coincidences been all deeply planned, no more perfect dramatic moment for the dénouement could have been chosen. Hope had sunk beneath zero, the stoutest of those who still prophesied my coming had grown faint-hearted, when without a moment's signal and by some process wholly inconceivable, through a country bristling with prisons and bayonets, across a vigilantly-policed sea, and through the thick ranks of the entire Manchester police force at this moment encircling the place of the meeting, Mr. Balfour's prisoner was in the midst of them. The house arose, danced, sang, wept, embraced each other, and for better than a quarter of an hour went raving mad with joy. Austere puritan Anglo-Saxons of the stamp of Jacob Bright, Robert Leake, and Sir Henry Roscoe, literally leaped into the air and hugged me until I was half-smothered. The Chief Constable of Manchester, a Mr. Malcolm, crept up behind me on the platform and informed me that he had a warrant for my arrest which he should have to execute. I replied that, the speech I had come to make once made, I should be quite at his disposal, but that, if there was any attempt to prevent me from addressing this audience fully and freely, he must understand the responsibility for the consequences would be his and not mine, and I waved a hand towards the excited multitude in front of us, the roar from whose thousand throats made it impossible for us to hear one another without shouting. The Chief Constable bowed and took the hint, and throughout the night's wild adventures proved that to be a gentleman was not to be an ineffectual officer of the law. Whether the excitable Irishman, sobered by the paroxysms of more excitable Englishmen, figured to less advantage as a moderating influence must be left to be judged by any who may have curiosity enough to read my words on the occasion for themselves.

The last passages of my speech grew into something like an altercation with my passionate audience who, when I mentioned my understanding with the Chief Constable, raised the cry: "No! No! you mustn't go!" and began to clamber on the platform and to insist I had only to jump into the midst of them to be safe from pursuit. It was one of the occasions when a powerful voice was of some value in dominating the tumult. It was, of course, obvious that even eight hundred policemen could not long stand in the way of such a multitude in such a temper; but, my mission to Manchester once accomplished, to disappear into space would have been to give Mr. Balfour his pleasantest form of revenge, since our success lay not in disembarassing him of my presence, but in holding him ruthlessly to his Irish policy wherever resistance could for the moment hit him hardest, whether in jail or outside it. The event, indeed, proved that my night march as a prisoner through Manchester was a more effective piece of propaganda than could have been a score of Hulme Town Hall meetings without that colossal State advertisement. I was placed in the centre of the enormous mass of policemen, and as we progressed at a slow march through miles of streets towards the sumptuous Town Hall of Manchester, where I was to spend the night, it was one unending scene of democratic triumph for humanism over force, bands of music bursting in here and there upon the procession, handkerchiefs fluttering, and cheers resounding from the windows, and from the tops of long lines of tramcars brought to a standstill, and the entire population, as it seemed, thrown into the same transports as the stolid members of Parliament on the Hulme platform.

Something more astonishing still was to follow. On our arrival at the Town Hall, the Lord Mayor (Alderman Batty) relieved the Chief Constable of

his prisoner, and ushered me with a courtesy almost too considerate into the State apartments. If (as I presume), the police guard remained somewhere discreetly on duty, I saw no more of them for the night. The Lord Mayor informed me that the somewhat awful suite of luxurious rooms in which I was to be lodged, was that in which the ill-fated Duke of Clarence had been put up during the recent Royal visit, and of which, as I write, the Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) has been the most recent occupant. A delicious little supper *en famille* with the Lord Mayor and his gracious wife, was the extraordinary end of a day so fertile in alarums and surprises. It was a piece of superb civic daring on the part of the Lord Mayor, and struck the imagination of the country all the more startlingly that, like every other particular of the Odyssey, it could never have been planned beforehand. The appeal to Cæsar was a success beyond the dreams of romance. Both the substance of Mr. Balfour's Irish policy and his personal pride had been mortally wounded, and by those of his own household. Not only had his prison locks been laughed at, but the convicted criminal who, according to his argument, was a more wicked enemy of society than the burglar or the wife-beater, marched like a conquering general through the streets of a multitudinous English town at the head of a police army considerably provided to heighten his *présteige*, and the Irish outlaw who, it was the essence of his prison policy, deserved to be exhibited to public ignominy in garments of shame, and fed on bread and water, was by the Chief Magistrate of England's second greatest city bowed into the State bed in which the heir to the Throne had only the other night slept a sleep which, one may guess, was not altogether so dreamless.

CHAPTER XXIII

A BAD LOSER

(1889)

A man who was not afflicted with the subtlety of Mr. Balfour would have found no difficulty in understanding the lesson of Manchester. The course he now took can only be accounted for by the quality of all others that might seem least applicable to him—stupidity. Far from recognising that he had been outraging the British sense of decency, he proceeded to outrage it more insolently than ever. Instead of sensibly closing the chapter of his prison theories with the surrender of six months before, at Tullamore, he wilfully reopened it under every circumstance that could suggest personal chagrin, as well as ineptitude in a ruler of men. His Irish prisoner, who was received with provoking honour by the people of Manchester, and lodged in the State apartments of his Royal Highness of Clarence by their Lord Mayor, was the morning after his transfer to Ireland felled to the ground by Mr. Balfour's warders in his prison of Clonmel, with every accessory of stupid barbarity, for refusing to do the very thing respecting which after a long struggle he had been formally justified, a few months before, in his refusal; now as then, the Chief Secretary gloried in these not very valorous insults to his captive, and this time with a perceptible ingredient of spite running through his misrepresentations and jests; and now, even more decisively than then, it was to end in a capitulation on every point dictated by his prisoner,

and the final disgrace of the policy of prison degradation which he had made the touchstone of his Irish Administration. If one need not dispute the Jovelike aloofness from human infirmities which Mr. Balfour claimed when he told Mr. Dillon in the House of Commons "he could assure the hon. gentleman that no articles he ever read, either in Irish or in English newspapers, had ever given him a moment's uneasiness, or the least desire to inflict vengeance on the Editor," it can only be observed that his words and his official acts were chosen with an infelicitous gift for throwing suspicion upon his own boast.

First let me recall the terms in which the Chief Secretary saw fit to address a festive Unionist banquetting party in Dublin at a moment while the people of Ireland, and, perhaps, a considerable portion of the people of Britain, were distressed by the unequal struggle going on within the walls of Clonmel jail. It need only be prefaced that the Press was excluded from the banquet, and the names of the hilarious company suppressed, and that the "prolonged laughter," and the "roars of laughter," with which his patrician humour was rewarded, were expressly inserted in "the official report."

"I had the honour of receiving at about a quarter to one last night—(prolonged laughter)—a telegram from the Lord Mayor of Dublin—(renewed laughter)—which I allude to now because I take it, it represents the Nationalists' case with regard to Mr. William O'Brien's treatment in prison, and in this document, the original of which I have got in my hand, I read—(I won't read it all)—'illegal and brutal violence'—(laughter)—that isn't it—(laughter)—'unexampled indignation'—(laughter)—'system of attacking and beating down your political adversary by torture'—(laughter)—No, that is not it. Here it is—'Mr. O'Brien has now been naked in his cell for thirty-six hours—(roars of laughter) and to-night

we learn that he is lying speechless, and that the prison authorities, considering his condition dangerous, have applied to you for instructions.' That, gentlemen, is the operative, the important part of the telegram which you will probably have all seen in the *Freeman's Journal*, and which I shall have to allude to in quite another connection in a few moments. Now, I want to say to you that every single substantial statement in that passage I have read is wholly and absolutely incorrect—(cheers). What has happened is this : Mr. O'Brien, after an Odyssey which I won't further dwell on, was arrested in the ordinary course, and was taken to Clonmel prison. When he got to Clonmel prison he refused to allow—he threw every obstacle in the way of—any medical examination ; he declined absolutely to be weighed—(laughter)—and, as he did not permit the doctor to form any judgment, from personal examination, of his case, he went through the ordinary process to which every prisoner is subject who offends against the law—(cheers). This happened on Thursday. It might surprise some of you—some of you who read, if there are such, who read only Nationalist journals—it may surprise you to learn that I have not the control and management of all the prisoners in Ireland—(laughter). The Prisons Board is not in my department ; the questions connected with prisoners do not, as a matter of course, come through either my hands or the hands of the Irish Office, and, therefore, it is only under exceptional circumstances that any questions connected with any prisoner in Ireland come before me. However, when I went down to the office on Friday, the facts which I have just stated were brought before me, and I immediately proceeded to write a minute in which I said that, of course, if Mr. O'Brien, having the prison clothes at his disposal, choose to stay in his shirt—(laughter)—and if he refused to submit himself to any medical

examination whatever, any evil consequences to his health which might ensue, he would be responsible for, and not us—(hear! hear! and applause). But, at the same time, I said I did not think we ought to permit Mr. O'Brien to ruin his constitution for the purpose of injuring Her Majesty's Government—(laughter and applause)—and I, therefore, gave directions that, as Mr. O'Brien would not allow himself to be medically examined, the reports made by Dr. Ridley and Dr. Barr upon Mr. O'Brien when he was in Tullamore jail should be sent down at once by special message to the doctor at Clonmel, so that in the light of these reports, and having learnt, what, in the opinion of the doctors who had examined Mr. O'Brien the condition of his health was, the doctor should most carefully watch Mr. O'Brien, and take care that no eccentricity of his should in any way risk his constitution. (Applause). And in order that the fullest medical opinion possible should be taken on this important point, the medical member of the Prisons Board has very kindly consented to go down and assist the doctor of Clonmel prison—a doctor in whom, I may say, I have every reason to believe that the State has a faithful and efficient servant. (Hear! hear!).”

Here it will be observed that, setting aside the artful artlessness of the contemptuous references to the Lord Mayor (Mr. Thomas Sexton)—who, as it happened, was a greater Parliamentarian than himself—the Chief Secretary hazarded only one specific allegation—viz., that my treatment was due to a refusal on my part to submit to medical examination, while he, not for the first time, set up the plea that “it is absurd to say that the management of Irish prisoners is in my department,” (speech of February 25th, 1889). Within a couple of days after the publication of my reply, he was obliged publicly to confess that his first statement was, to put it bluntly,

a falsehood, and his defence of irresponsibility was proved to be so impudently at variance with the truth that he subsequently acknowledged he was personally responsible for the treatment of his prisoners in every particular.¹

It is time to let the reader know something of the occurrences which gave the member for Manchester's joyous wit its chance, and tickled his admirers into "roars of laughter." Be it borne in mind that the publication of the facts was forced upon me as the only means of refuting a gross official untruth which was uttered behind my back, and the text of which I was not even permitted to see. As it is the last occasion on which it will be necessary to dwell upon distressing personal details, since the Manchester-*cum*-Clonmel episode marked the final overthrow² of the programme of prison frightfulness divulged by Mr. Balfour at Clouds, a lengthy extract from the statement which Mr. Healy took from my lips at the time in Clonmel prison will, one may hope, be forgiven :

"About eleven o'clock a.m., on the morning after my arrival in Clonmel prison, the chief warden,

¹ *E.g.* "He had never pretended that the course *he* had pursued was free from doubt and difficulty . . . but they had not yet said anything in the debate which either convinced him that *he* was wrong in going so far as he had gone or convinced him that *he* ought to have gone further."

² Since the above lines were penned, thirty-one years after the episodes of Manchester and Clonmel jail, so incorrigible are the ways of England's Chief Secretaries, precisely the same story of senseless barbarities followed by shabby surrender in face of an unconquerable resistance, was repeated in the case of the memorable hunger strike of 85 *Sinn Féin* prisoners in Mountjoy Jail, April 1920. The description by Mr. Arthur Griffith, M.P., of the prison policy of Mr. Macpherson in 1920 as an attempt "to treat all political offenders as common criminals with the threat to murder them if they refuse this status" is, *nomine mutato*, no less true of the policy of Mr. Balfour a generation before.

Gough, entered my cell, and said 'Come to the Doctor.' I followed him to a wide open court, stone paved. A gentleman was standing at a high desk in this open corridor. He did not salute me, nor in any way inform me who he was. His first words were 'open your vest.' I was obliged to ask him 'Are you the prison doctor?' He said, 'Yes,' and drew out his stethoscope. I opened my vest, and he placed the stethoscope to my chest on the right and left side, as well as I can remember, without asking to have my shirt opened. He next said, 'Have you a cough?' I said, 'I should be very sorry to be personally discourteous, but owing to the perversion on a former occasion of my communications with the prison doctor in Tullamore, I have no means of protecting myself against misrepresentation, unless to decline to make any communication as to my health, but you are at perfect liberty to examine me in every way you choose.' He said, 'that does not matter; open your shirt; your shirt is too stiff.' I then opened my shirt, and he examined me with another instrument—I believe a binaural stethoscope—after which he said, 'put out your tongue.' I did so. He then struck me lightly on the stomach, and without another word put up his instrument. I had to ask him, 'is that all?' He said, 'Yes,' and I turned back to the cell with the chief warder, who had been a witness of the examination, and who, like the doctor and myself, was standing in the corridor during the examination.

"About five minutes afterwards the chief warder returned to my cell and said, 'We must force you to put on the prison clothes.' I asked to see the governor, who appeared to have been waiting outside the door, for he immediately appeared. I said, 'I have to ask that a doctor shall be present during any attack upon me.' He said, 'I cannot do that; you have passed the doctor.' 'Then,' I said, 'you will

have to strip me by force,' or words to that effect. I placed my back to the further wall of the cell; three warders immediately rushed at me with the chief warder. The four seized me, and a violent struggle took place between us, the governor standing by. They succeeded after a struggle in flinging me on my back on the floor, dragging my clothes away meanwhile. When I was down one man placed his knee on my chest, not, as I believe, brutally, but with a pressure that caused me considerable suffering. I heard someone, I think the chief warder, say 'Don't hurt him.' The pressure was then relaxed, and I struggled to my feet again, and renewed the struggle, while my clothes were being torn off one by one. I was then flung a second time on the floor; this time on my face. I continued to struggle with all my force, while they were dragging prison clothes on me, and from the struggle and exhaustion, I became so faint that they had twice to cease, in order to give me a drink of water. During this second struggle my strength was totally exhausted. I heard the governor give the order to have my hair and beard taken off, and I remember the first few dashes made at me with a scissors. After that I lost consciousness, and when I recovered, found my mouth full of hairs, and was propped up on a stool between two warders who still held my arms. The governor said, 'Surely you have resisted enough now; you know it has to be done.' I said to him, 'You know little of me if you do not know that the struggle is only beginning now. The instant my hands are free, I will fling these clothes off again.'

"The warders having followed Alderman Hackett to the door, I instantly threw off the prison clothes. Three of them rushed at me again, and another struggle took place. They succeeded in forcing on some of the prison clothes again, seizing and twisting my arms all the time. In consequence of my

resistance the chief warder told them not to mind forcing on the coat or vest this time. I again became so faint that they again put water on my lips, but continued to hold my arm while I stood leaning against the wall for a considerable time. So far as I can estimate the scene had by this time lasted half an hour.

“The warders continued to hold me for a long time, when the chief warder said ‘Bring him along,’ and I was immediately dragged to the door in my shirt-sleeves, and with my feet naked. No intimation was given me that I was being brought to be weighed. Up to this moment the question of weighing had never been mentioned to me, either by the doctor or by the warders, and I should never have made the slightest objection if I had known that that was their object. I was dragged across a large space, which I since learned was the main hall of the prison. At the moment I was so stupefied, and my bad sight made me so helpless (my spectacles having been taken from me during the struggle and not returned), that I had only the most confused notion of where I was being taken; my impression was that I was being dragged to a punishment cell. I said to the warders who had a hold of my arms again and again, ‘Where are you dragging me to?’ They made no reply, but dragged me on to what I now believe was a weighing machine, beside which the governor and doctor were standing. My legs and arms were dragged about the machine in an exceedingly painful way, and I then said, ‘As long as you are treating me in this barbarous fashion, I will submit to nothing except by force.’ The Governor said, ‘take him away.’ They apparently gave up the attempt to weigh me.

“I was then dragged, still by the arms, in the opposite direction towards another cell, still under the impression that I was being brought to some other

punishment. I was thrust into a cell in a different part of the prison, in which there was nothing except a stool.

"The moment I was left alone I threw off the prison clothes, and retained only a shirt. They made no further attempt to force the clothes on me. . . . I was left alone the entire day and evening. I remained until eight p.m. walking up and down the cell, with no covering except the shirt. The day was bitterly cold, and my teeth chattering, but I procured some warmth by lying on the floor, close to the hot-water pipes. I was unable to eat, but drank as much of the milk as I could. At eight o'clock, the usual hour for going to bed, a warder opened the door and put in a plank bed, without a mattress of any kind. He also brought in two single blankets and a quilt. I put one of the blankets on the plank, and the other, with the quilt, over me, and lay down. I did not sleep throughout the night. It was bitterly cold. I got my head on the hot-water pipes and utilized that as a pillow (none being supplied with the plank). About half-an-hour afterwards—namely, about a quarter to nine a.m., as far as I can calculate—the governor and chief warder entered my cell. The governor said, 'you will kill yourself if you go on like this.' I said, 'If I am killed I will take good care it is not I who will have the responsibility.' He said, 'You must know that there are prisoners who refuse to take food, and we are obliged to force them by putting mechanical restraints on them.' I said, 'There is not the least fear of that in my case, as I am perfectly determined to take all the food I possibly can.' He said, 'Of course, I know you would not do anything of that sort, but if the doctor thinks your life is in danger by your remaining naked all this time, he will be obliged to order that you should be put under mechanical restraint to save you.' I said, 'I am in your power, and it is,

of course, perfectly within your power to put any mechanical restraint you please upon me; but I warn you that you will have to continue it to-day, to-morrow, next week, next month, until you have me either dead or mad, or until you return my clothes.' He said, 'You know it is perfectly impossible for the doctor to order your clothes to be returned.'

"They went away, and shortly afterwards the doctor entered the cell. I was under the impression from the governor's communication to me, that he had come to order the mechanical restraints that were threatened. To my surprise he immediately began to express his regret that I was under the impression that he had treated me offensively. I said, unhappily the circumstances left me no other conclusion, this applying as to his manner, as to the cursory nature of the examination, as to his curtness in dealing with me, and as to the extraordinary place and mode of the medical examination. He told me that he was suffering from a heavy cold himself, and that that might have accounted for his manner, and that the place was the usual place for examination of the prisoners. He immediately ordered a bed. The governor asked 'Will we bring the mattress?' and he said, 'Oh, certainly.' The plank bed, with the fibre mattress, was then brought into the cell and I was allowed to lie on it.

"I lay there throughout Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. On Monday a gentleman came into the cell with Dr. Hewston, and introduced himself as Dr. O'Farrell, of the Prisons Board. He asked had I any complaints. I replied, 'It is extremely painful for me to have to seem uncivil, but I am in this cruel position that almost anything I say to the officials is liable to be perverted against me, and they, even if they have the will, are not in a position to correct these misrepresentations.' He said, 'I can assure you that there is not the slightest danger of that in the present case. . . .'

“ Dr. O’Farrell then asked me whether I objected to his examining me, and I said, ‘ Not in the least ; neither to you nor to anyone else.’ At the same time I told him distinctly that I was fighting this battle not as a sick man, but as a political prisoner. I said, ‘ I will contend for nothing that the poorest or the commonest man convicted under the summary jurisdiction of the Coercion Act is not equally entitled to. With me it is not in the least a question of food, or even of treatment, but of classification. I told the officials before in Tullamore, and I am quite as willing now as then to carry out the proposal, that this whole struggle might be obviated by the simple expedient of making all prisoners convicted under the summary jurisdiction clauses of this Act a separate ‘ class.’ Whatever their treatment might be, if this were done, I for one would not have the slightest objection to wear whatever prison uniform would be set apart for that ‘ class,’ or to perform any menial offices whatever that would be imposed on my comrades. Those who think us criminals could think so still, and would have the satisfaction of punishing us as much as any ordinary criminals, while we would have it established that it was under this Act, and under this Act alone, that we were criminals ; but the object of our present treatment clearly is to attempt to degrade and confound us with criminals. You are doing an unnatural and impossible thing. and it is because I believe that this treatment has only to be seen out to its logical end to make its continuation impossible, that I am willing to undergo any penalties whatever in asserting my position.’ To this Dr. O’Farrell made no reply, but assured me that the Prisons Board would consider my representations. Upon the following day my clothes were returned to me without comment. . . . I am convinced that if there is a sworn inquiry, none of the officials would question, in any important particular, the above statement of fact.”

•

It may be added that Mr. Balfour himself never attempted to impugn in any particular the above account of the occurrences which he had travestied with so little scruple. The meannesses of the Clonmel reprisals proved to be but a sorry satisfaction for the vexations of Manchester. They, in truth, very substantially strengthened the National Protest which was arising throughout England against his dealings with his prisoners. Everybody felt that the smallest hint from him at the right moment would have warned his prison officials against recommencing the abortive campaign of Tullamore, and nobody could pretend to any feeling of respect for the tardy discretion with which he ran away from the new campaign as from the old, as soon as the Clonmel brutalities were found to have as little effect upon his prisoner as his witticisms at the Antient Concert Room banquet had upon his Manchester electorate.

The stern principle that "the prison rules under which sentences will be carried out under the Crimes Act will be precisely identical with the prison rules used under ordinary circumstances," was the cornerstone of the entire edifice on which his reputation as a successful Coercionist was to be built up, and the edifice was by this time cracking, and crumbling about his ears in all directions. As soon as priests began to be numbered among his criminals, Father Matt Ryan and Father Stephens refused flatly to don the prison garb, and Mr. Balfour the Coercionist had to call back upon Mr. Balfour the Theologian for the subtle *distinguo* that priests were canonically obliged to wear ecclesiastical dress as his excuse for humbly letting the Canonical law prevail over his own proud thesis that within the jail they were not priests but convicted criminals. The pious fiction was all the more laughable that there was a law still on the Statute-book which made "the wearing of ecclesiastical dress by Irish Catholics a criminal

offence in itself." It is true that Mr. Dillon, who in the summer of 1888 was sent to Dundalk jail for six months for a speech inciting the Massareene tenants to pay no rent, was in a state of health which induced him to put on the prison clothes without resistance, and characteristically generous was the Chief Secretary's return in his taunt in the House of Commons that "the hon. member for East Mayo was never out of hospital for a single day while in prison," and when Mr. Dillon playfully asked: "Will the right hon. gentleman be kind enough to state the nature of the disease which prevented my hair being cut?" could find no wittier retort than: "My recollection of the diseases of the hon. member is not very complete, although I have read a great deal about them."

On the other hand, not only the priests, but most of the members of Parliament who had played a conspicuous part in the Plan of Campaign struggle outside were now making themselves still more formidable antagonists of Coercion within the prison walls by their indomitable fidelity to the Three Points of our prison resistance. The story above related of official barbarities, followed by steadfast endurance, and by eventual official surrender in Clonmel, might, with the bare change of names, stand for the experiences of James Gilhooly, John Hooper, William Lane, James L. Carew, "Paddy" O'Brien, Dr. Tanner, David Sheehy, John Roche, and others, with the additional glory of steadfastness in their cases that their maltreatment was all the grosser wherever the light of publicity could be effectually shut out, and it was not until after their release that the sufferings of many of them were discovered at all. The Chief Secretary was further galled by the sight of his Irish spectres conjured up almost nightly in the House of Commons, in encounters in which the passion and wit of men like Mr. Healy and Mr. Sexton

began more and more to tell against his own flimsy affectation of *ennui*: he had to deal with an Irish Press as impervious to his threats and punishments as the members of Parliament; with a band of Englishmen and Englishwomen of the finest hereditary devotion to human liberty traversing the country, throwing light into the dark places and refusing to be intimidated by the terrors of the Coercion Courts, or their rude experiences of police violence; with a swelling chorus of protest from men of eminence in France, America, Canada and Australia; above all, the Ministerial Whips were beginning to be able to convince him that his art of governing a sensitive nation by small tortures and *fin de siècle* sarcasms was making the constituencies restive:—in his own words that his Irish doings were “injuring the Government.”

The game was this time definitely lost. In my own case, the reparation was almost comically complete. The criminal of Clonmel jail brutalized by four turnkeys, bidden scrub the flags of his cell, deprived even of his plank-bed for refusing, and threatened with “mechanical restraints.” was a few days afterwards transferred to Galway in a first-class special train, like a magnifico on his travels, attended by two warders who acted as his affectionate valets, and was thenceforward treated with an affluence of consideration far surpassing his three modest original demands, the library of the local Queen’s College thrown open for his delectation, and his only “prison task” that of writing a novel, should he be so pleased as to write it on prison foolscap. How much the transformation scene had to do with political opportunism and how little with magnanimity, may be judged by the state of mind in which the Governor of Galway jail (Mr. Michael Murphy) received the announcement of my coming. “I consulted with my wife what I was to do,” he

told me. "She said, 'Whatever happens, Michael, don't do anything that will disgrace your children. God will provide for us in some way of His own.' So we made up our minds that, if we had to beg the world for it, I would not lay a hand on you. It was only when the escort arrived at the gate they handed me a letter directing me to treat you with every possible consideration."

The game was lost, and, with reluctance be it said, Mr. Balfour, for all his engaging qualities, was a bad loser. It took him nine months to make up his mind to extend his concessions to all his prisoners, proceeding in the meantime on the detestable principle of yielding first in those cases that were most likely to attract public attention, and he strove to the last to disguise his capitulation by ruses that robbed it of all honest credit. To own that ours was a demand for the classification of prisoners according to the nature and motives of their offences, and that it had carried the day even in Britain, would have been a procedure too plain for that intellect of many facets. He would fain argue that "for themselves—for those who were going to make the speeches—they asked one measure of justice and for those who were going to be the dupes of their speeches, another measure"—that it was all a selfish whine for preferential treatment for certain leaders "because they were popular, or because they were genteelly brought up." He would make the House of Commons gape by remarking: "I am charged with having jested over the sufferings of these people. Sir, I have never jested," a sentence or two before he broke out again into a strain of merriment at the expense of his prisoners which was not too easily distinguishable from the pleasantries of the common or garden cad. He repeated in one passage his plea that "the management of the prisons in Ireland is not in my power, and no more it is," and in another took to himself

the merit of his claim that "the Crimes Act prisoners had been treated with extraordinary consideration"—the prisoners in whose case, by the way, he had for two years insisted there must be no departure from the treatment of the scurviest criminals.

Above all he was lost in surprise at the depravity of the Irishmen who could avow that the object of their agitation with regard to prison treatment as of their whole lives was to help to make the government of their country by alien coercionists impossible. "It is not humanity, but politics, which is at the root of the whole matter," he exclaimed, in the tone of a scandalised archangel. As if he could make a handsomer acknowledgement of their right to be treated as political prisoners, or more innocently reveal that, if he was now compelled to abandon his own policy of degrading and defaming them for precisely the same political motives, it was because they had succeeded, and he had failed, in carrying the opinion of the civilised world, and even of his own countrymen with him. For, in his own words, "it was not in the interest of humanity, but of politics" that he now threw up the sponge. The avowal was wrung from him in one bitter-sweet interjection after another—"The truth, undoubtedly, is that, as I admit, you have produced some temporary effect among your own followers" (he was speaking of Gladstone's) (February 25th, 1889), and later on: "I have been told over and over again that there is a great tide of public opinion rising on the subject. I am not at all prepared to say that the judicious efforts of the gentlemen who got up 'The National Protest' may not have produced an effect upon the public mind in some parts of the country. I do not doubt it at all. . . . I quite admit there may be and very likely is something entirely justifiable in the feeling which has been aroused" (March 13th, 1889).

All this was but to lead up to the subterfuge of

calling in a Special Committee on Prison Rules to give Mr. Balfour an escape from his quandary. The letter of instruction to Lord Aberdare's Committee lost nothing of the casuistical and evasive spirit which had inspired the rest of his dealings with his Irish antagonists. The one question in dispute which really mattered was whether political prisoners were to be classified as such, or for political reasons branded as criminals. In his warrant to Lord Aberdare, Mr. Balfour expressly forbade the Committee to inquire into the classification of prisoners and confined them to a farcical investigation whether it was desirable to alter the rules as to prison dress and the clipping of prisoners' hair in the interests of "cleanliness and health." Lord Aberdare's Committee in their Report rebuked in a way not to be mistaken the prohibitive nature of their commission :

" In the letter of the 11th April, 1889, defining the character of the inquiry, you stated that it was not proposed to refer to the consideration of the committee the classification of prisoners ' according to the real or supposed motive of their offence.' To this direction we have *endeavoured* to conform, and though we have been unable to suggest any alterations in the existing practice altogether unconnected with the general character of the offence for which the imprisonment is inflicted, we make no suggestions or recommendations founded upon the real or supposed motives of the prisoners."

They even so far transgressed themselves against Mr. Balfour's rules as to administer a sharp reprimand for the " arbitrary and unequal treatment " accorded to Mr. Edward Harrington, M.P., and in their report adverted in the following terms of vindication to the prison protests which used to appeal to the risibility of the Chief Secretary in his early manner " Whatever may have been its original intent, this (prison) dress has too long been associated with all that is vile

and contemptible to be assumed by lesser offenders without a sense of degradation and a shock to the self-respect which should never be unnecessarily inflicted."

What the Chief Secretary did not leave his Committee free to do manfully in public, he had to do of his own authority in private ; but each concession was made in the worst way and in the temper of one who could not give so much as a pin without crooking it. His prisoners were allowed to wear their own clothes, not on the ground of the distinction which civilised mankind called for, but only if their clothes were expensive enough. A distinction which favoured the rich swindler and excluded the honest poor. They were absolved from menial prison tasks, but only if they were able to pay a poor prisoner to discharge them for them, in conformity with some obsolete regulation which was suddenly resurrected to cover the retreat of those who had punished John Mandeville to the point of death for a refusal which was now discovered to be a legal one. Finally, the association with common-law convicts was given up, but the new regulation, it was proclaimed, must depend wholly upon the caprice of the Governor and the Prisons Board. The truth, of course, was, as the present writer in his letter to the Aberdare Committee "declining to have anything to do with an inquiry so circumscribed," pointed out, "the two minor points referred to them (and others) had been settled already by the pressure of public opinion." In order to stem "the great tide of public opinion" which was "injuring the Government" the Chief Secretary had to go through the form of ordering of his own authority what had been wrung from him at the expense of grievous suffering and of human life.

The victory for his prisoners on the Three Points of their resistance was complete. Unfortunately, these tortuous methods so far succeeded that the rights of

political prisoners continued to be left dependent upon the convenience of the Government of the moment and upon the amount of resistance apprehended, instead of being honestly written out in the prison code ; and as the Liberal Home Rule Government, during their eight years of all but omnipotent power, neglected either to make the Prison Rules clear or to repeal the infamous Coercion Act, the resistance to which brought power within their reach, the country is once more, as these pages are written thirty years after, harrowed with the same spectacle of thousands of young Irishmen brought to death's door and beyond, in the same protest against the treatment of felons and miscreants being inflicted upon men whom England, were they struggling in any Empire except her own, would hail as the heroes of human freedom. Now, as then, the prison rules are in a state of chaos and vacillation, as the fortunes of political parties fluctuate, or the fierceness of the prisoners' resistance mounts or dies down. Nor is the thought a consoling one in the year in which England is preening her wings with pride in her tremendous conquests as the guardian angel of the small nationalities that the young generation of *Sinn Fein* should be carrying on their lonely prison struggle with scarcely a trace of the British sympathy which struck down the arm of Mr. Balfour and nerved the hearts of his prisoners in the days of Gladstone.

CHAPTER XXIV

“ MAKING OF HELL A HEAVEN ”

If the poet of Italy says truly that the sharpest of sorrows is to remember happier days, it is no less true that the remembrance of miseries overpassed may sometimes be the supremest present bliss. The change from Tullamore jail or from Clonmel jail to Galway jail was, in the matter of material comfort, represented mainly by a cup of tea from a teapot all my own, but the contrast in the realms of spirit was one that transported me to a very heaven. The issues seemingly so squalid, but in reality of such import for the fate of a weak nation—the still more squalid controversies with an antagonist not above misrepresenting his prisoner, who could only reply in (literally) letters of blood—the everlasting night watches during which every sound might be the signal for some desperate physical affray ending, it might be, in bloodshed or death—were all over, like the spectres of some hag-ridden sleep. And victoriously over, for that was where the difference between hell and heaven came in. An immense peace overspread my soul. The iron walls of Galway jail could not have smiled on me more softly had they been walls of jasper ; the sunsets as I saw them flaming over the Twelve Binns of Connemara were as truly of bright gold as if the Twelve Binns were twelve gold mines pouring their treasures at my feet. The anchorites of the Thebaid had not a more rapturous sense of safety from the world's devouring fangs—from the self-torments and tumults

that seemed to have been banished a whole Lybian desert away.

And the anchorites of the desert had still to count with the wild beasts for neighbours, while all the living things that visited my solitude had been transformed into angels and ministers of grace. The Governor, for whom and his children my arrival might, for all he knew, have spelt ruin, watched over me with the grim tenderness of an Archangel Michael, whose comings and goings, even to the clank of bolts and locks, and on the background of giant stonewalls, became the brightness and the music of my days. The step on the stairs of the prison Doctor—Professor Kinhead of the local Queen's College—although he was no political sympathiser—grew to be scarcely less welcome, for the sound was as the herald of a daily symposium with a refined and scholarly man of the world. Another hour of sunshine came with the visit of one of the Chaplains—the most welcome of them all was Father Conroy, who became my lessoner in Gaelic pronunciation, and fashioned my Southern tongue to the classic accents of Iar-Connacht. The two warders who were sent with me from Clonmel on my first arrival—Head Warder Gough and Warder Ahern—sent upon Heaven only knows what preposterous business of guarding against escape or forcible rescue—grew to be my devoted body-servants, as to whom my only pain came to be the difficulty of finding anything with which to keep their affectionate solicitude occupied. And during my two subsequent terms I found other prison Huberts equally gentle-hearted. If the Prison rules, by a last freak of absurdity, forbade me a daily paper, there was my brave Governor, with a daily newspaper printed in his brain, which no terrors of the Prison Board could prevent him from delivering to his prisoner an hour after the *Freeman* reached the jail gate. To complete the penance in a white sheet

of the torturers of Mandeville, and the firm and resolute plank-bidders of Clonmel, I was left free to roam over the whole catalogue of the Queen's College library, like a Sultan who could bid the fairest beauties of the world's Poetry and Classics to his Harem.

It was in this stone-walled Arcadia I found the rarest luxury of all—*les longs et silencieux loisirs* (to use the words of M. Burdeau) in which I composed the only two romances I was destined ever to write—*When We Were Boys*, and *A Queen of Men*. Mr. Sexton once made the remark ; “ There is one thing I envy you, that wherever you go you can carry your workshop with you.” I was now to realize how much this fairy-godmother's gift was to be valued. *When We Were Boys* occupied the brightest months of my first two sojourns in Galway and *A Queen of Men* was the delicious “ hard labour ” of my last. The works were written on sheets of official blue foolscap, stamped with the Royal lion and unicorn, and marked with the red ink initials of the Governor at the head of every page. The Governor was also solemnly directed to act as Censor of the contents of each page as it was completed. No prison task could well have seemed more burdensome than that imposed on the unfortunate Governor of deciphering the mysterious inscriptions of a handwriting as puzzling for most people as any on the stones of Nineveh. To my amazement he not only discovered the key to the mystery, but would spend his evenings poring over the manuscript with the fondness of the faithful John Forster hanging over the first reading of a page of Dickens. That no trait of absurdity should to the last be wanting to Mr. Balfour's Draconic Prison rigours, the Prison Board confiscated my writings on the official foolscap they had supplied me with, and only consented to surrender the manuscript under the threat of a lawyer's letter.

When We Were Boys was planned, so far as it was planned at all, as a transcript of life in Ireland in the 'sixties, with special relation to the conflict between the young idealism of the patriots and the selfless but shortsighted ecclesiastical powers whom Cardinal Cullen induced to range themselves on the side of England and of the Parliamentary corruptionists. The book literally wrote itself, without any "plot" beyond the workings of Irish life as it was lived, and the graces of pure literature were, no doubt, neglected for the passionateness of a political appeal, at a moment when the sympathies of the British Democracy for a sturdy Irish independence, "neither Saxon nor Italian," were already as good as conquered. The hope was to conjure down the superstition that "Home Rule" meant "Rome Rule," by depicting the youth of Ireland to be capable of holding its own against aggression in the political sphere from any power no matter how worshipped in its proper sanctuary, and better still, by proving the doctrines of civic freedom to be cherished no less bravely by the most powerful school of Irish ecclesiastics themselves. The most ticklish topic in Ireland, no doubt; but it was for the very reason that my soul was aflame with admiration for the order of splendid Irishmen I had been admitted to study by Archbishop Croke's fireside, in their prison cells, and by their people's side in many a moving scene of famine or oppression that I felt bold enough to believe that the truth would not be found to do injustice to the Irish priests, while it would be of inestimable value to their nation. It was the impossible that happened. The book that was for many months the pleasant companion of my prison home, did, indeed, come to exercise a lasting and most potent influence in the life of a generation of my countrymen, lay and cleric, but it aroused among a too considerable section of the Irish Bishops and priests an

unsleeping anger and an implacable opposition to its author, to which the politicians who led Parnell's Parliamentary movement to destruction, owed that support in the country which alone could have given them their maleficent power. And the poison worked all the more subtly that the attacks upon *When We Were Boys* as an anti-clerical libel, were made in secret, and were never subjected to the test of public criticism.

In the Introduction to a Re-issue of the novel thirty years after (Maunsel, 1919), I have endeavoured to throw some light upon this amazing aberration of judgment.

"The mystery is, fortunately susceptible of a whimsically simple explanation. The greater part of those who raged most furiously against the book had never read it, or had only read a few grotesquely misleading passages forced under their eyes by a slipshod, and not even malicious newspaper reviewer. It so happened that, at the request of the book-critic of the *Freeman's Journal*, he was furnished with advanced proofs, in order to enable him to prepare an extended and understanding notice of the book for the day of its publication. With the indolence of his tribe, his matured judgment took the form of a pageful of extracts strung together by a few sentences of golden laudation on his part. Worse still, being himself as mischance would have it, a man of marked anti-clerical bias, he with a special relish scissored out those passages which threw into a strong light *Monsignor McGrudder's* haughty contempt for insular politics in comparison with eternal things, and the passionate protests with which the fiery patriotism of his young countrymen paid him back. Not so much as a hint was given of the main argument and purpose of the book, which was to depict the mischief wrought in the religious even more than in the patriotic sphere, by that divorce between the two

vitalizing energies of the Irish soul decreed by Cardinal Cullen's superb, but as time has long proved, near-sighted conception of the interests of his Emancipated Church. I pleaded for the homogeneity of priests and people as the essence of wholesome Irish life, and lo! to a thousand clerical breakfast-tables I was presented as though I had fulminated some decree chasing the priests from all influence in the business of their country. The false impression thus stupidly started, it has required a quarter of a century of bitter experience to overtake. The average plain-going rural priest, little addicted to the reading of romances, wanted to know no more, and either never dipped into the book at all, or as soon as the Parnell Split tore the country asunder, a few months after the book was published, only dipped into it in search of political explosives against its author. The poison of faction finished what honest ignorance had begun.

There was something of the humiliation of falling a victim to some coarse practical joke in finding oneself girded at as an anti-clerical in the most secret recesses of whose being there had never lurked any feeling but one almost of worship for an influence which was as the oxygen of the Irish air, the fragrance of our Irish countryside, the bringer of good tidings here and hereafter, the consoler who 'turneth the shadow of death into the morning.'"

In every phase of Irish politics for the next quarter of a century, I was to feel the effects of the silent, impalpable, unreasoning hostility thus secretly propagated. The public cause was destined to be a more serious sufferer. The three capital mistakes which wrought the destruction of the Parliamentary movement as Parnell understood it, were the personal ferocity with which Parnell was pursued in 1890, the abandonment in 1903 of the policy of Conference, Conciliation and Consent which the country had

just endorsed by the mouths of all her representative authorities, and the enslavement to the English Liberal Party, which was the consequence. None of the three calamities could have occurred without considerable clerical support for the politicians with whom the responsibility lay, and it will be found beyond dispute that in none of the three cases would that support have been so considerable were it not that the opposite and, as time has shown, the right side had the ill chance to be espoused by the author of *When We Were Boys*. It was a matter of unconscious cerebration, to be sure, but was none the less attended with sorrowful consequence for the nation.

And now it all turns out to have been, like the Split of 1890 itself, a stupid misunderstanding. While whole libraries of novels have come and departed from human memory, the truth that was in this book, whatever its faults, proved to be such a saving salt, that after the thirty years which are counted for a generation of men, Messrs. Maunsel presented me with a requisition for a re-issue of *When We Were Boys*, and the first edition was snapped up within a couple of weeks by the youth of a better instructed time, and men learned for the first time that the unread book which haunted the slumbers of honest Irish priests without number like a spectre, had all the time commanded the almost excessive admiration and attachment of churchmen of the greatness of Cardinal Manning, Archbishop Croke, Bishop Duggan and Canon Sheehan. A more singular phenomenon still. The book was found to be so true to the deepest things in the Irish soul, that it prefigured with an almost uncanny fidelity the self immolation of the young and pure of heart, which in our latest days has redeemed the country from a new Parliamentary betrayal even more inexcusable than that which sent the hero of *When We Were Boys* and his like to their doom. At all events the book itself did

but thrive and flourish for all the babble of idle tongues. For many a year it was a cherished guest in faithful Irish homes as far away as the mining camps and backwoods of America, and the golden sands of Australia.¹ And now comes the supreme

¹ *When We Were Boys* had even the distinction of an edition in the French tongue. In the fulness of time I was to learn that my future wife was already wondrously watching from her heaven the labours of the penman in his Galway workshop. Her translation was published by Charpentier under the title *À Vingt Ans*, and its sufficient encomium is that it was prefaced by an Introduction from one of the most eminent statesmen of France, M. Burdeau, whom I had subsequently the privilege of knowing and who possessed in a high degree the character of wedded romance and genius for affairs which is the glory of the French. Wounded and made captive in the *Année Terrible*, he after three gallant attempts made good his escape from his German prison, for all his aching wounds and all the horrors of that cruel winter, and won the most coveted of all French military distinctions, the red ribbon awarded to him by the votes of his own brother Normaliens. He had by this time reached the high station of President of the Chamber of Deputies, and, but for the untimely death by which he paid the penalty for his young hardships was by general consent designated for the Presidency of the Republic. I find the temptation irresistible to tell in his own words of crystal clearness in the Preface how accurately the penetrating intellect of one of France's foremost statesmen had then possessed himself of the aims and secrets of the Irish soul.

“ L'homme à qui nous sommes le plus redevables du présent ouvrage de M. William O'Brien n'est peut-être pas M. O'Brien lui-même. Mon honorable ami ne se serait jamais douté, je le crains bien, du talent de romancier qu'il portait en lui-même, et la politique l'aurait absorbé tout entier, si M. Balfour ne lui avait assuré, avec le concours de ses juges spéciaux, de longs et silencieux loisirs dans les prisons irlandaises. Rendons grâce à M. Balfour. Ce service n'est pas le moins considérable de ceux qu'il aura rendus sans le vouloir à la cause de l'Irlande. . . . L'Irlande a fait depuis quinze ans des pas de géant vers le succès. . . .

“ L'Irlande peut-être fière d'avoir accompli une aussi profonde évolution. Quelle transformation, depuis l'époque d'adolescence héroïque où nous transporte le roman de William O'Brien. Que de maturité aujourd'hui et que de jeunesse alors ! Tout le parti irlandais semblait 'avoir vingt ans,' et le type du poète qui traverse le livre, l'air inspiré, les cheveux au vent, entraîné vers le péril et

joy of being summoned back *d'outre tombe*, so to say, to see the new generations catching up the torch which it can no longer be mine to re-illumine.

Canon Sheehan believed a *Queen of Men* to be my best work.¹ I have for it myself the partiality of a father for his least favoured child. For, notwithstanding the greater writer's tender prediction, up to the present, at all events, *A Queen of Men* has remained as remote from the world's vision as the figure of *Graanya Uaile* amongst her Western mists. It was the first attempt, so far as my knowledge extends,

¹ "Last night I had to close the book at Chapter XXI, 'The Wreckers,' quite overpowered by the dramatic intensity of the description. I am not acquainted with any chapter in fiction that equals its dramatic force. . . . I think you have produced a memorable book. It is your greatest step towards realising the vocation that many have predicted for you—that of being the Walter Scott of Ireland. It is a grand Irish novel and will be taken to the heart of the people."—Letter of Canon Sheehan, April 30, 1898.

vers la mort par ses chimeres autant que par son courage, était bien un type national. L'Irlande n'avait jamais appris la politique et il semblait qu'elle dût ne l'apprendre jamais. Elle a trompé l'attente; tous ses amis applaudissent à sa jeune sagesse. Et pourtant nous aimons encore, en France du moins, à la revoir telle qu'elle était au temps de ses folles équipées. C'est cette Irlande que remet sous nos yeux, dans un cadre où le romanesque est une forme de la vérité, le livre de M. William O'Brien, si poétiquement et naïvement traduit par une personne deux fois désignée pour cette tâche, étant également familière avec la pensée intime de l'auteur et avec les secrets de notre langue française. C'est le vieux génie celtique de l'Irlande, c'est sa gaieté indomptable, son héroïsme souriant, son imagination rêveuse et son cœur tendre, sources intarissables de dévouement et d'abnégation, de pitié active pour les victimes, de pardon pour les oppresseurs, voilà ce qui nous séduit, ce qui nous attache à elle par des liens à la fois doux et puissants. L'Irlande triomphera, nous l'espérons, par les qualités politiques qu'elle a su emprunter à l'Angleterre; mais c'est parce qu'elle est restée l'Irlande, c'est parce qu'elle a une âme à elle et profondément distincte de l'esprit anglo-saxon, que son triomphe nous est précieux, à nous et à toute l'humanité."

to reproduce in real life an epoch of extraordinary dramatic interest combining the first fiendish incursions of the new religion among the simple homes and monasteries of Connacht, the substitution of a rapacious Feudalism for the free-and-easy tenure of the clans, and the last living example of a free native Court in all the glamour of its own racy Gaelic civilisation, and of its close relations with the splendid Court of Spain. But the *Monsignor McGruders* of those days were missing, or rather were engrossed in the battle for their own race, with the arms of the spirit and of the flesh alike, against the adventurers and the Married Bishops of England, and for critics already too deeply prejudiced, the absence of any cause of quarrel was, I am afraid, a barely less intolerable grievance than had been found in the pages of *When We Were Boys*. There are indications, while I write—and not the least of them in a recent paper on *Irish Fiction* by a distinguished Jesuit Father—that even *A Queen of Men* may still come by her own modest kingdom.

But that is not the moral I desire to point here. It is the infatuation of a British statesman of the first rank, who set out with the undertaking to treat his prisoner as a pest of society, to be exterminated by the contrivances of the mediæval dungeon, and ended by being compelled to feed his prisoner with the honey of Hybla in a garden of the Immortals, to crown him with the wreath of wild olive of quite a respectable literary reputation, and to make the saddest day of his sentence that which released him to the grim furies of public life awaiting him outside the jail gates.

CHAPTER XXV

THE PARNELL COMMISSION

(1889-1890)

It was the Parnell Commission devised for the destruction of the Irish leader which re-enkindled his waning popularity. Never was the immanence of justice in human affairs better verified than in the completeness with which the ruin planned by his persecutors fell upon their own heads. Since smaller men were taken off by the conspiracy of Titus Oates and his suborners, no individual was ever threatened by a combination of power and perjury so formidable in its patrons, so infamous in its methods, and to all seeming so impossible to withstand. It was the culmination of a system of poisonous defamation under the title of "Parnellism and Crime" carried on for many months with all the resources of the most powerful newspaper in the world. Even an appetite jaded by unceasing doses of libel in every hateful form against the Irish leader was whipped up to an excitement past description when men read one morning in the *Times* the *facsimile* text of a letter in which Parnell avowed his complicity in the Phœnix Park murders, and apologised to a murderous confederate of his for the hard necessity which drove him nominally to condemn them.

Curiously enough the calmness with which Parnell received even this last outrage of his tormentors, confirmed the hopes or fears of a British public, which had never been free from the suspicion that the silence and dignity which baffled them in the great

Irishman were in reality the evidences of guilt. The singular speech he delivered in the House of Commons on the night after the publication of the first *facsimile* letter, was received with blank faces of bewilderment on the Liberal benches. It contained a few sentences of quiet repudiation of the forgery, full enough of confidence, as they read now, but unemotional, and even casual as they then sounded, even in our own ears, in view of the appalling outrage of which he was the victim. But even from this show of contempt, rather than indignation, he passed at once to a detailed examination of the forged letter, word by word, and even letter by letter, which reduced his friends to a condition of pained silence, and all but caused the exultation of his foes to burst audibly forth. With the painstaking and loving interest with which he always followed up a mechanical or mathematical demonstration, he pointed out that a certain "t" was a clumsy imitation of his own, that the indentation in the heavy loop-line of the "l" was a peculiarity he had dropped since the year 1884, and must consequently have been copied from some letter of his before that date, and that the word "hesitancy" in the forged letter was one he had never used, and did not believe to be good English, and so on. His performance of that night constitutes one of the most amazing human documents in history. Greatly to his own surprise, for after sitting down, he whispered to me, with his carefully modulated smile on such occasions: "I think these fellows really imagine they have struck ile!" The truth, of course, was that with his usual practical directness his mind had passed from indignation at the forgery to detailed measures for its detection. But Anglo-Saxon wisdom was so nonplussed by Parnell's cool fortitude that in all probability the Government side of the House was not the only one on which he left more than a suspicion

that the *Times* calumniators had indeed "struck ile," and that Parnell's movement, if not his life, was trembling in the ignominious balance.

The odds against him seemed to be beyond counting ; an avowed confederacy, offensive and defensive, between the sober-sided Leader of the House, the blameless Mr. W. H. Smith, and "my old friend, Mr. John Walter of the *Times*" ; the machinery of Dublin Castle, its choice Resident Magistrates, police officers and lawyers, its secret sleuth-hounds and informers, placed without reserve at the service of the Forgers ; every dark spot in Ireland and in America searched for miscreants with some tale of crime to sell or to invent for vast rewards ; "charges and allegations" not confined to the plain issue whether the *Times* letters were a splendid Imperial service or a hideous crime, but ranging over the whole field of indictment of a whole nation for every idle word or obscure village misdeed in the course of an agrarian revolutionary in the main nobly justified by results ; and for the judges of it all a tribunal wholly English, sitting in England and bitter haters of the Irish Cause, with the first law officer of the Crown, the Attorney-General, (Sir Richard Webster) to invest the prosecution with the full weight of a governmental adoption of the forgeries. England's misreading of Irish feeling proved to be as preposterously astray as usual. Parnell's Parliamentary colleagues to a man, the Irish people and their whole world-spread race rose to the rescue of their leader with a passionate enthusiasm never before surpassed ; a Defence Fund of more than £40,000 was raised as swiftly as the subscriptions could be taken in, and Parnell's impressive figure rose with the old majesty high above the legions of unscrupulous politicians, loathsome informers, and not less loathsome suborners, leagued for his destruction.

It seems unaccountable that neither to the con-

ductors of the *Times*, nor to the Law Officers of the Government, who were staking their reputation upon the genuineness of the *facsimile* letters, nor yet to Parnell's own keen intuition did it occur to dispose of the entire structure of falsehood by the simple method which Archbishop Walsh was the first to happen upon some months later. The Archbishop examined the letters with the aid of a powerful microscope, and discovered that every letter of every word was separately formed, leaving a perceptible gap between the point at which each letter ended, and that at which the next began, showing manifestly that each had to be laboriously traced by the forger from genuine letters of Parnell on various subjects and on different occasions. That so clumsy an imposture should have imposed upon some of the shrewdest minds of England, and for many months thrown an Empire into a fever is a marvel even in the country which impeached the five Catholic lords for "a damnable and hellish plot" on the testimony of the infamous villain Oates. It is not, of course, to be believed that Mr. Walter and his editor and manager should have incurred their ruin by publishing the Forgeries with an actual consciousness of their origin, but their guilt is little, if at all, attenuated by the plea, They had become so hardened by the unpunished publication of the most horrid innuendoes and libels of every description on the representatives of Ireland, that they had probably become incapable any longer of estimating the value of the collaboration of a wretch like Pigott, whose reputation as a professional swindler and blackmailer was too notorious to impose upon anybody with the slightest acquaintance with the underworld of Irish life. The truth is they had given the key of their conscience to the wire-pullers of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union, whose Secretary, and a certain Trinity College celebrity known in convivial circles as "Professor

Red-headed Whiskey," and sad to relate, another Trinity College professor of a very different character—the biographer of Shelley—had long superintended the *Times* supply of murderous munitions, and welcomed Pigott's wares without scrutiny as the crowning attraction of their stock.

The part, too, of the miserable O'Shea—if one must not add of his instigator, Chamberlain—is not to be forgotten in endeavouring to account for the fatuity of the conductors of the *Times*. It will be remembered that in his evidence before the Parnell Commission, O'Shea swore that the forged letters were in the handwriting of Parnell, with which he claimed to be specially familiar. He also owned that it was through Chamberlain he was first asked to give information for the *Times*, and that he visited the Radical renegade in his own house before delivering the goods. It is not to be doubted that the complicity of O'Shea, who did not deny on cross-examination that he was thirsting for vengeance on Parnell, did much to encourage the *Times* to brazen out the Forgeries. Nor is there much risk of injustice in concluding that the man who was financed by Parnell until the rupture of relations as disgraceful for the one as they were tragic for the other, was henceforward financed by the *Times* in their campaign against a common enemy, and that the Divorce Proceedings in the following year, which wrecked the Irish Cause for a generation, were but another and more successful form of revenge for the failure of O'Shea in the witness-box, and of the *Times* and the Ministers in the closet, to compass the ruin of the Irish leader by saddling him with the authorship of the Forged Letters. No verdict less harsh than this is likely to be found by History, and must certainly not be looked for from the most charitable of the old colleagues of Parnell, who remember with what implacable savagery the great newspaper persevered in the attempt to satisfy its own grudges,

and those of the basest of men, with the knowledge that it would be recouped by the Government every pound of the million of money spent in world-wide corruption and subornation of perjury, if it should succeed in establishing as truth and virtue the most impudent imposture to which a great country and its Government ever fell as victims at the hands of the most pitiful of scoundrels.

Parnell held with good reason that nothing except Pigott's suicide would have convinced England that the forged letters were not genuine. The truth would have remained obscured in the red cloud of suspicion and crime raised by the evidence of highly-paid informers like Le Caron and the tribe of minor miscreants sharked up by the lawyers and *agens provocateurs* whom Dublin Castle placed in the employment of the *Times*. Pigott's mere admission that he was the forger of the letters would have been dismissed as collusive and charged as a new count in the indictment against "Parnellism and Crime!" The death of the forger by his own hand alone could have been decisive. In Parnell's eyes, the suicide, wretched a creature as he was, got out of the transaction with less disgrace than his employers. The haunting anxiety that the truth could never be established beyond doubt did not, however, ruffle the sweet fortitude with which the Irish leader bore the interminable early stages of the Commission. He sat in court immovable as a fine statue of marble, while the procession of the most loathsome beings in the pay of the Castle or of the landlords came and went; the clear-cut features often pale with illness, but never with an illness that suggested weakness; the least self-assertive figure in the chamber, and yet the figure of all others to which every eye turned as to a somebody in whose presence the greatest lawyers of England, and the three judges in their scarlet and ermine robes, had an unimpressive and almost petty air.

The one occasion on which the illness which was already visibly undermining him got the better of him even for a moment was during his own examination. In English Courts the witness is obliged to stand at the witness rail while giving evidence. He made no complaint during the endless hours of cross-examination, while the wasting disease from which he suffered was having the effect which can be imagined, but he told me that on more occasions than one his brain swam, and he found himself—it was the case of Savonarola on the rack—repeating as in a dream whatever words were put into his mouth. For example, the Attorney-General who, good plodding man, was intellectually a schoolmaster's ferule to his witness's Toledo blade, made great play of Parnell's assent to his suggestion that, in a certain debate he was "wilfully misleading the House of Commons," when what he really meant was that he was refusing to take them into his confidence in a way in which the average cautious Minister nightly follows his example. But all that he dismissed with the good nature, seasoned with a tiny grain of malice, with which he took the few humours as well as the oppressive abominations of the Commission Court. Asked what grasp of the case was shown by his solicitor, Sir George Lewis—one of the most skilled of court managers, and genuine of friends, but also one of lordly prodigality in his schemes of law costs—Parnell would reply: "There is one part of this case Lewis understands better than us all, and that is the subscription lists of the National Indemnity Fund in the *Freeman's Journal*." One evening Parnell forgot, in the Court, the small black bag in which he was supposed by the newspapers to carry his most secret documents. The next day, when he was relating the mishap with the news that he had just been to Scotland Yard and recovered possession of it, Harrington cried out, in some dismay: "Good

Heavens, I hope there was nothing very confidential in it." Parnell's reply was : " Yes, a pair of soiled socks, my night shirt, and my comb and brushes," adding with a chuckle, which was almost a laugh : " I should have liked to see the faces of the boys in Scotland Yard when they opened their prize."

Parnell always maintained that the Nationalists made a profound mistake in taking any further part in the proceedings of the Commission Court after the dramatic exposure of the Forgeries in the witness-box and the death of the Forger. That was the only definite issue raised by the inquiry and it was disposed of in a way which filled all men of good faith with horror of the entire conspiracy and sympathy with the Irish Leader in the fortitude and dignity with which he had borne himself against his enemies. All that came afterwards was an anti-climax. The months spent in enabling *The Times* to recover some show of respectability in endeavouring to mix up in the public mind extracts from stale speeches with the sporadic crimes which were the offspring of eviction and coercion, and against which the open and advised speaking of the national platforms was the best safeguard, produced nothing which might not have been got by searching old newspaper files, but did much to deaden the public recollection of the fate that had overtaken the one tangible attempt to engage the responsibility of the Irish Leader. Had Parnell's own advice prevailed and the counsel and witnesses of the Irish Party been withdrawn, there can now be little doubt that any further proceedings of the three Judges would have lost all hold upon public interest, and the Government would have been driven to the country staggering from the blow which involved their own disgrace in scarcely a lesser degree than that of *The Times*, as well as from the all but universal reprobation now felt for Mr. Balfour's policy of exasperation in Ireland.

Parnell's strong remonstrances, unhappily, proved

unavailing against the opposition of Michael Davitt and Sir Charles Russell, who had amassed the materials for great speeches and would listen to no counsels that would deprive them of the opportunity of delivering them. The speeches were afterwards published in book form, and undoubtedly contained matter of grave historical value, laboriously and convincingly put together, but it may well be doubted whether they would not have better served the purposes of their authors had they been delivered in a series of platform speeches throughout Britain in the fruitful heat of a General Election, rather than day after day in the deadening atmosphere of an English Court from which all reality had departed. Russell's fame was already made safe by his magnificent cross-examination of Pigott, for the equal of which as a masterpiece of sheer intellect and moral compulsion directed to the gradual unmasking and shaming of human villainy, until it left no better refuge than self-slaughter, one would have to go back to one or two of O'Connell's most famous achievements in a different manner.

Parnell would not, however, have found it impossible to overcome the objections of the great advocate—absolute though he sometimes was—had he not quite failed to shake Davitt's determination to retain his seat in the Court to the finish. In the Parnell Commission Court, as in most other passages of his life, Davitt chose a place of his own, friendly, but at trying moments critical and apart, and having himself, during the brief life of the Land League as an organisation, consistently devoted his speeches to the denunciation of crime, he was, perhaps, not unnaturally anxious to give emphasis to these denunciations without perceiving with what relief the three judges marked and applauded his individualistic attitude, and construed it to the prejudice of colleagues who were not to be hustled into acknowledgments of

the responsibility of themselves or of the country for outbreaks of passion which were fewer in number than in any semi-revolutionary movement in recorded history, and the guilt of which lay chiefly with the canting evictors and coercionist politicians who would fain have stripped the people of every bloodless weapon of defence. By a singular contradiction, if Davitt's undue sensitiveness to the good opinion of the three judges gave Parnell a certain amount of uneasiness, his unconquerable desire to keep up relations with certain of his old comrades of the secret societies in America, in the hope of turning them to account against *The Times*, made Parnell more uneasy still. There can be no question that Davitt's visit to Paris, during the early sittings of the Commission Court, was inspired by the noblest patriotic motives, but Parnell, who never lost his distrust of the secret forces which work in the background of every great national movement, and as to whose extent or operations he could only vaguely guess, was even angrier—and, as I think, unjustly angrier—with Davitt's well-intended measures in Paris than with his refusal to quit the Commission Court after the exposure and suicide of Pigott. Parnell had unlimited patience with mere rashness, but for what he conceived to be stupidity, he had none. Davitt fell into the mistake of sending his cablegrams to America by the cable which touched at Valentia, and thus enabled the accomplices of *The Times* to tap his most confidential messages. For these messages from the point of view of the defence Parnell had but an indifferent respect, but the *bêtise* which put them in the hands of the enemy aroused in him a quite extravagant degree of annoyance. "I dare say we shall have them all out in the great speech," was his bitter comment.

The die was cast, however. The two monumental speeches were delivered to audiences quite unworthy of the effort; *The Times* was able to prolong

at a prodigious cost the farce for eight months after Pigott's death, in order to weaken the recollection of the infamous figure it cut on the one issue that really mattered; the three judges had time to amass the materials for a judgment of as much intrinsic value—I have already suggested—as a judgment upon a collection of old newspaper files; and the most serious consequence of all, in Parnell's eyes, was that the opportunity was lost of forcing a General Election while the English constituencies were throbbing with sympathy.

The Parnell Commission has already found competent historians and will find others; my own part in the grand drama was a small one and may be shortly related. My first encounter with the Three Judges was in January 1889, a week or two before the Carrick-on-Suir prosecution and the Manchester adventure, to answer an application by *The Times* to commit me for contempt of court for an article in *United Ireland*. The article was written by the acting editor, Matt Bodkin, a devoted friend, who during my now constant compulsory absences conducted the paper with a combined daring and wisdom that was never at fault in the perilous years of our mortal combat with Mr. Balfour. It was a withering indictment of *The Times'* procrastination in using the Commission Court from October to January for the daily defamation of Parnell and his Party by stale newspaper readings, while shirking every invitation to come to the point as to the only tangible allegation against them, and in the meantime scouring the convict prisons and the American dynamite dens, with the active co-operation of the Government, in search of informers and perjurers to prop up their Forgeries. Bodkin pressed hard to be allowed to take the sole responsibility on his own shoulders. This it was impossible for the legally responsible editor and publisher to allow, but in my address to the Court, I

identified myself with the article without reserve, denouncing unstintedly the abuse of the Court and of public patience week after week in *The Times*' manifest eagerness to elude producing their proofs of the Letters, which alone had made the appointment of the Commission possible, and winding up with the declaration : " Looking over the article in its entirety, in substance and in fact, I am sorry to say I can find in it nothing whatever for which I can express honest regret and nothing which it may not be a solemn public duty for me to repeat." To the astonishment of a public accustomed to think of an English High Court as an Olympus whose thunderbolts must instantly strike dead the man who should flaunt its majesty to its face, the presiding judge, Mr. Justice Hannon, after taking twenty-four hours to deliberate, dismissed the application of *The Times* in a speech in which the entire Bar and Press descried not merely a measure of sympathy with the traverser which might almost have made old wigs stand on end, but further a covert, and indeed barely covert, intimation that the dilatoriness of *The Times* in facing the music had richly deserved the trouncing it had received at the hands of the object of the Attorney-General's sphere-shaking application for contempt. The hint was promptly taken. The very next day the newspaper readings were summarily dropped, and the Attorney-General threw on the witness-table his next best trump card to Pigott—one of the Phoenix Park murderers, Delany by name, who was fished out of a penal establishment, by the bribe of the cancellation of his life sentence, and doubtless by ample cash considerations to boot, to give some nebulous evidence of certain relations of the Treasurer of the Land League (Mr. Pat Egan) with the Invincibles. The evidence proved on cross-examination to be silly hearsay and nothing more, but at least the gentleman of the Invincibles was an approach to business.

Three weeks after, Pigott himself was on the witness-table and *The Times'* last card was played.

While Sir Charles Russell was tracking the wretch to his last lair with the remorselessness of Nemesis, I was daily kept acquainted with the progress of the duel by the Governor of Galway Jail, whose perhaps casuistical code of duty forbade him to give the *Freeman* report into my own hands, but permitted him, having spent an hour absorbing the essential passages, to repair to my cell every afternoon to repeat the best part of the cross-examination, question and answer, with a fidelity of memory little short of supernatural. When, after the flight to Spain and suicide of the Forger, Parnell's desire to leave the Forger's paymasters naked to the scorn of the world was overborne, I was forced to cut short my peaceful labours in the composition of *When We Were Boys* in order to be transported to London to give my evidence. In Holloway Jail, my sojourn was only less luxurious than in the royal apartments at the Manchester Town Hall, what with a Head Warder who promised me a swinging Home Rule majority in his division of Islington, a Scottish doctor who discoursed the origin of life by the hour with an enthusiasm that embraced every theory from Plato's self-existent First Cause to Clodd's—especially, I am sorry to say, Clodd's—and the services of my two faithful valets of the Irish Prison Service—Head Warder McArthur of Galway and my inseparable old brother in misfortune from Clonmel, Warder Ahern—who blacked their prisoner's boots and toasted his bacon rasher and provided his chop in the delightful old lady housekeeper's room at the Law Courts during the adjournment and jawed the Holloway officials pretty sufficiently if there was any arrangement wanting to his comfort. Under the eye of the Three Judges, my imprisonment in London became, in fact, so derisory that the gold-braided caps of the two Irish prison officers became one of the sights of

the Strand, and their prisoner, when the Court was rising, had more than once to make confidential inquiries from the policemen in the Law Courts as to where his captors were to be found for the return to Holloway.

Inasmuch as *United Ireland* had been for eight years the storm centre of the hottest fight against (to use the words of Archbishop Croke) "three dynasties of Coercionists," *The Times'* counsel counted upon the most appetising fruits from my cross-examination, and great was the affluence of the rabble-rout of Dublin Castle crime-mongers and informers "to see the gladiator die." Inexpressible was their disgust to find that I had nothing to withdraw, and nothing to apologise for, but on the contrary in response to Sir Richard Webster's horror-stricken citations, reiterated *United Ireland's* most militant sentiments in patches more purple still. What was there to be made of a witness who, far from wilting under the suggestion of treason to England, went out of his way to claim it as the most cherished honour of his life that the Fenian chiefs had entrusted him with the control of their affairs in the province of Munster, without even asking him to go through the formality of an oath? But the passage in my evidence which dwells in my memory with most satisfaction is one which arose while Gladstone was an attentive listener sitting among the traversers' counsel. Sir Richard Webster can hardly be acquitted of the suspicion that it was by way of punishing what was, I think, the great old statesman's first visit to the Commission Court that he picked out for his entertainment a far-away speech of mine at a great meeting in the Phoenix Park to protest against my suspension in the House of Commons on the motion of Gladstone, who was at the time Prime Minister. His eyes piously raised to Heaven quite certainly managed to take in the Grand Old Man within their gaze, as he intoned with the

dark emphasis of a chorus from *Orestes* the very decided terms in which I expressed my contempt and detestation for the English Parliament of the day in its pretension to govern Ireland. "Listen to this: did you say this?" the Attorney-General thundered. "Here in the heart of the British Empire is a nation of Irishmen with several millions of others all over the globe, whose relations with England are simply the relations of civil war tempered by the scarcity of firearms (loud cheers)."

The hit was a palpable one, as was plain from Gladstone's pained look of discomfiture. A flash of fortunate memory enabled me instantly to turn the tables. "Certainly," was my reply, "and I say it now again. But please read on, and if you don't I will," and having been handed the newspaper file, I completed the quotation in these words, spoken, be it remembered, in the full tide of passionate quarrel with the English Parliament and not the least with the Liberal Party therein :

"I only wish we could pass every able-bodied man in Ireland through a course of service in the English House of Commons under the present conditions. I believe that they would return charged with a more intense hatred of England and of English rule than they could imbibe from reading all the histories of the past wrongs and sorrows of our race. But I must say there are about half-a-dozen Englishmen in the House of Commons for whom I, and I believe every member of the Irish Party, have a deep and sincere respect, and I must say that I myself would have no hesitation in placing Mr. Gladstone first on that list of men, whose personal character and intellect and, I would say, tenderness for Ireland are conspicuous. But every hour I spend in the House convinces me more that men of that description are only as rain-drops in the ocean of English cant and ignorance and anti-Irish prejudice and stolid self-sufficiency that overflows the

English House of Commons when they come to deal with Irish matters."

The toss of the great lion-head and the faded eyes flashing brightly out again gave me one of the liveliest personal joys of my life. And a pleasure more substantial became mine twenty-four years later when I read the letter in *The Times* of Mr. Lee Warner, the Headmaster of Rugby, revealing Gladstone's admission to him that it was the reading of this identical speech in the Phoenix Park which marked the precise moment of his becoming a Home Ruler.¹

The Commission Court dragged drearily along from May 1889, when Pigott shot himself in a Madrid hotel to February 1890, when the Three Judges reported to Parliament. The eight months after the exposure of the Forgeries were spent in pure loss. The few who will ever care to look the Report over will not marvel so much that by a strict party vote the Government which openly instigated *The Times* should have inscribed it on the Journals of the House as that the Liberal Home Rule Government and their Irish allies should never have thought of expunging it, in justice to Parnell's memory, during the eight years when they might have done it any night they chose to carry a resolution on the subject. Eternal justice, however, exacted its own sufficient penalties. The conspiracy which was to have overwhelmed Parnell raised him to a higher pinnacle than ever of influence with his race and with the world. The journal which made its

¹ "I remember in the year 1890 asking Mr. Gladstone whether he could identify in his mind the crucial moment at which he determined to adopt the (Home Rule) policy. I can see him now as he paused and thought and then replied: 'Yes, I had been reading a speech of Mr. William O'Brien's and I put it down and said to myself, what is there in this speech that I must get to realise before I throw it aside? And I saw then that there never was and never could be any moral obligation on the Irish race in relation to the Act of Union.'"—The Headmaster of Rugby in *The Times*, October 1913.

great gamble in collusion with the Government which lent " my old friend Mr. Walter " the entire machinery of Dublin Castle, and gave him a tribunal of his choice, fell so low as to sink on its knees to ask Parnell's mercy in a court of law and brought upon its head a financial ruin from which it took more than twenty years to emerge. Most acceptable vengeance of all in the affairs of nations, we have lived to see *The Times* which reviled O'Connell, which exulted in the Irish Famine, which pursued the Home Rule movement and its leaders with a seemingly inextinguishable malignity and hate, become under a happier inspiration the most powerful British apostle of Home Rule. For it is the mere truth to say that *The Times* of Lord Northcliffe has done more than all other powers or parties of Britain since Gladstone, put together, to make the eventual vindication of *The Times'* old enemies an inevitable and a shining one.

CHAPTER XXVI

“ REALISING THE IDEAL ” (1889-1890)

It was now a race for time between Ireland and her enemies. If a General Election could be precipitated, few believed the Coercionist Government would survive it. If the Government could put it off to the last hour of their lease under the Septennial Act, much—perhaps all—would depend upon whether Mr. Balfour could make a complete conquest of Irish disaffection in the meantime. The course of the by-elections—the resounding Home Rule victory at Govan in the very crisis of the conspiracy against Parnell—left the weatherwise politicians in no doubt that an appeal to the country must restore Gladstone to power with a majority no further to be gainsaid. But now that the precipitant supplied by the collapse of *The Times* case for the Forgeries was thrown away, there stretched before us a period of three years during which the Septennial Act made the Unionist tenure of office impregnable. It was for the purpose of utilising this period of grace for a final endeavour to wipe out the resistance of Ireland that Mr. Balfour now bent all his energies.

The odds in his favour were immeasurably greater than appeared on the surface. No doubt, on both wings of his Irish policy—his war upon the Plan of Campaign and his scheme of prison degradations—he was a beaten man, while he was viewed by the Party Whips as the prime loser of by-elections in Britain. The spectacle of his jails filled with the first

citizens of the country—fifteen members of Parliament, five Mayors of Irish cities, the flower of the Irish priesthood, and some five thousand in all of Ireland's foremost men, to whose integrity of character the very judges who sentenced them paid shamefaced homage; with no other result than that imprisonment became the most coveted of public honours and his proclamations of the League were made the Sunday sport of the country—supplied the illustration of all others we could have wished to preach to liberty-loving men of the hatefulness of government without the consent of the governed.

On the other hand, in what had now become a time race, our very successes in forcing him to pass Parnell's rejected Reduction of Rent Bill into law and to shuffle out of his programme of prison barbarities gave him a curious advantage in singling out for vengeance the comparatively small bodies of tenants and their leaders who had put these humiliating defeats upon him. It became his boast in the House of Commons that there were no evictions going on in Ireland except upon Plan of Campaign estates. The fact was, in truth, of the essence of his misrule in Ireland: it was the success of the Plan of Campaign which had saved the rest of the country from wholesale eviction, and it was "to make examples of" the Campaigners for that very success that the Government and the landlords now refused them all quarter and let loose the horrors of eviction against the Campaign estates until their rooftrees should be given to the flames and their fields as bare of population as the Palatinate under the hoofs of Louvois' dragoons. Stung by Mr. Balfour's taunt that "if he were an Irish landlord he would rather beg his bread than yield to the Plan of Campaign," a Syndicate of Irish landlords, supported by wealthy English financiers, was formed for the virtual extermination of the only twenty bodies of Campaign tenants who had not

already succeeded in obtaining a settlement. In accordance with a fatal tradition which has justly made the best Irish landlords responsible for the crimes of the worst, a great landowner who was unimpeachable in the management of his own private property—Mr. Smith-Barry, who possessed extensive estates in the Counties of Tipperary and Cork—was chosen as the head of the confederacy. The new design first came to a head on the Ponsonby estate in the County of Cork. The substantial justice of the tenants' demands was never disputed. The venerable clergyman (Dean Keller) who put himself at the head of his parishioners, was received with honour and enthusiasm in the great towns of England when he explained them. Had not the Land Act of 1887 wilfully debarred these tenants from its relief, the trouble would long ago have been peacefully composed in the Land Courts. Even now negotiations were in progress, in which a difference of 10 per cent. between landlord and tenants alone remained to be compromised, when the new Landlords' Syndicate stepped in to break off all hopes of peace and subsidised the landlord to undertake the eviction of every man, woman and child on his property.

The announcement was made while I was still in London after release from Holloway jail, and there was nothing for it but to put to Parnell straight the question whether the perpetration of this enormous crime was to go unresisted? The difficulty could only have arisen owing to the loyalty with which we had restricted the Plan of Campaign to the small number of estates he and I had originally agreed upon. None had since been added except a certain number of other interdependent estates which no exertions of ours could have dissuaded from making common cause with them. The very completeness of our success in the great majority of these struggles enabled the Chief Secretary and the Land-

lords' Syndicate to concentrate all their strength for the ruin of a handful of isolated bodies of tenants. The country was exhausted by years of savage coercion which was every day carrying off to captivity the stoutest of her representative men, and the flower of her youth, and was disheartened by the indefinite postponement of the relief promised by a General Election ; and the masses of the tenantry, yielding to a human infirmity as old as the resignation of his Greek countrymen to the immolation of Sinon, were too busy harvesting the reductions of rent showered upon them by the new Act to be always mindful to whom they owed the reductions and the Act. To make matters worse, Mr. Dillon had left the country for Australia, in poor health, early in the year, partly to avoid giving evidence before the Parnell Commission, but still more owing to the necessity for replenishing a dangerously depleted Campaign Fund, and his departure threw an unendurable weight of responsibility upon my own shoulders.

To all this, Parnell yielded a ready and generous assent. Whatever had been his own misgivings when the Plan of Campaign was launched, he owned they had been answered by its success in compelling the Government to reduce the judicial rents and free the leaseholders, in utterly baffling and shaming Coercion, and capturing the sympathy and imagination of the British electorate. Now, at the eleventh hour, to allow Mr. Balfour and the landlords to recover any show of victory in Ireland before the General Election might be to sacrifice Ireland's last chance for Gladstone's lifetime and for our own. But what did I propose to do ? The answer was to meet the new landlords' combination by a counter-combination embracing the entire strength of the Irish people and their representatives. Mr. Smith-Barry was the owner of a vast estate in the richest plains of Tipperary,

populated by a giant breed of men who, by grim methods of their own, had in a previous generation conquered peace for themselves, and consequently had no occasion to disquiet their landlord while the rest of the country was working in the throes of the Land League revolution. If the head of the new Syndicate was within his rights in trading upon the peacefulness of his Tipperary tenantry in order, for class interests of his own, to compass the destruction of thousands of people in a neighbouring county who had never done him any wrong, who could challenge the right of their brother-tenants in Tipperary to forbid the crime on pain of compelling their landlord to grapple with the class-war he had little counted upon at his own doors? But if the prosperous men of Tipperary were to be stirred to action, it could only be, and ought only to be, with the knowledge that they would be obeying the unequivocal appeal of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and of their leader, above all, in an enterprise of supreme National urgency, and would be supported with all the resources of their race. In a word, the attempt could only be made if Parnell would consent to come over himself to preside at a Tipperary Convention, and start a National Defence Fund upon the single issue of the right of the Irish tenantry to meet the cruel and vindictive campaign of depopulation planned by the new Landlords' Syndicate by a defensive class-confederacy of their own. One visit and one speech was all that was stipulated for. His personal responsibility would be still carefully guarded. It would be no longer a question of propagating the Plan of Campaign but of thwarting an inhuman scheme of vengeance upon men who had again and again offered to submit the justice of their claims to arbitration. At the same time the encouragement to eviction which the landlords derived from the struggle being restricted to a few isolated estates, in accordance with Parnell's

original request, would be at an end, and the evictors would find themselves confronted with a combination as wide as the Irish race, with the unmistakable sanction of the Irish Leader, and upon an issue on which the whole trade union strength of Britain and every honest instinct of humanity would be with us.

Parnell was, I thought, relieved to find how moderate a call was made for his own intervention. He agreed that the proposal would establish the struggle in Ireland upon a new basis of legality, and would probably frighten the Landlords' Syndicate into abandoning their estate-clearances altogether. He only doubted whether the tenantry of Tipperary were to be moved out of their fat prosperity to take romantic risks for distant strangers. Until he was reassured on that head, he could not engage his own responsibility for an adventure which might prove to be a fiasco. But he had no objection that I should go to Tipperary to put my own sanguine anticipations cautiously to the test, and if my experiences were satisfactory, and if Archbishop Croke should be found willing to co-operate, he promised to go over to preside at the first of a series of County Conventions in the Archbishop's Cathedral town of Thurles, and lay the foundations of a great national combination against the vindictive barbarities planned by the Evictors' Syndicate. Upon this undertaking I repaired to Tipperary to make proof of the practicability of the proposal, at my own individual peril, and without any public mention of Parnell's name or promise. The results surpassed my wildest expectations. The men of Tipperary had been long chafing under their inactivity, while the rest of the country was in death-grips with Coercion, and sprang to arms at the first call to action with all the sternness of passion without words which was their tradition. The Archbishop was enraptured with the news, and did not hesitate long to accept the full responsibility

of publicly saying so. The tenants proceeded with as much prudence as determination. They appointed a deputation, headed by Canon Cahill, their parish priest, to wait upon Mr. Smith-Barry in London with a memorial remonstrating with him in respectful terms upon his interference between the Ponsonby tenants and their landlord when their differences were on the point of an amicable settlement, and "earnestly urging him, in the interest of tranquillity upon this hitherto peaceful estate, to relinquish a work of extermination which was calculated to inflame the worst antagonism between landlord and tenants, and to produce a counter-combination for the tenants' protection, to which we would feel ourselves forced by every feeling of humanity and self-protection to adhere." Mistaking the visit to London of the deputation for irresolution, Mr. Smith-Barry repulsed them with words of pitiless hauteur, thirty families on the Ponsonby estate were expelled from their homes by way of a first dose of terrorism, and two prosecutions were instantly levelled against myself. One was for conspiracy "to prevent Mr. Smith-Barry from doing what he had a legal right to do," the prosecution being itself an audacious conspiracy to prevent his tenants from doing what they had an equally good legal right to do. The other was a charge of carrying on the Plan of Campaign on the Smith-Barry estate, the truth notoriously being that what was really dreaded in the new movement in Tipperary, was that it avoided all controversial relations with the Plan of Campaign, and raised the entirely separate and unassailable issue of the tenants' right to exercise the same power of combination for the protection of their brother-tenants which Mr. Smith-Barry had exercised with his brother landlords for their destruction. All which was a reassuring sign that the Government had recognized the formidableness of the new Trade

Unionism, and were driven to their most desperate resources to stifle it at its birth, To make quite sure of my removal from the scene, before the Tenants' Defence Organization could be placed on its legs on the lines concerted with Parnell, two additional prosecutions were instituted against me for speeches on the Kenmare estate in Kerry, the hearing being timed for a week after the date fixed for the prosecutions in Tipperary.

Barely two weeks were available before my disappearance. I utilised the interval for an appeal to Mr. Smith-Barry's tenantry in the County of Cork to make common cause with their brethren in Tipperary. Our meeting in the City of Cork for the purpose was proclaimed, and the city occupied by a small army of infantry and hussars, under the command of Captain Plunkett, to trample down any attempt to defy the proclamation. While Captain Plunkett was marching his squadrons about the city streets in search of any eligible pretext to charge or shoot, I transferred myself during the night to the midst of Mr. Smith-Barry's estate at Clonakilty, and addressed an enthusiastic meeting of the tenantry without interruption, the district having been thoughtfully denuded of policemen to supply Captain Plunkett with his battalions for city service. That brutal swashbuckler had his revenge for his defeat by scenes of blood-fury more disgraceful than any other I can recall even in a time when the Castle officials' want of wit was habitually avenged by cowardly onslaughts on a disarmed people. When I arrived in Cork that night upon my return from Clonakilty, the railway platform was in the possession of a perfectly savage mob of armed men, for whom the best excuse that can be imagined was that they were the victims of some grotesque panic as to what impossible thing might happen in the way of a rescue or insurrection. Their blazing eyes and hideous

animal yells suggested even to one who has never been too harsh a critic of the Irish police in the mass, men maddened with drink and with rage after a day of disappointment and popular derision. Their commander, with his sword raised aloft, rushed at me as I left the railway carriage with the desperation of a tipsy man dreaming he was charging a battery of cannon, and shouted that I was his prisoner; the most representative citizens and clergymen who attempted to approach to shake hands with me, were felled to the earth with clubbed rifles or batons; one of my Parliamentary colleagues, "Paddy" O'Brien, was, without a shadow of justification, stretched on the platform in a pool of blood from a terrific blow upon the head, which went within an ace of costing him his life; and this was but the overture to a series of savage excesses by my drunken captors lasting all through my transfer by the night mail train to Tipperary. The officer in command thrust his naked sword at the breast of a young girl in Mallow for approaching to shake my hand; and three of my escort discharged their revolvers past my ear into the midst of an unoffending crowd on the Charleville platform for the same offence. The absurdity, as well as brutality, of their panic was heightened by the fact that I was no sooner transferred to the charge of another and a sober police officer a couple of hours afterwards in Tipperary, than I was immediately released from custody on bail. Nay, the charge which was made the pretext for my arrest, and for the bloody scenes attending it, was a few days afterwards abandoned altogether by the Crown on the discovery that in order to substantiate it, Mr. Smith-Barry would have to appear in the witness-box, and reveal the whole story of his Eviction Syndicate.

It is likely that, had I been free to mention from the start the Irish Leader's promise to put himself

at the head of the anti-eviction movement, neither the Chief Secretary nor the Landlords' Syndicate would have persisted in challenging a new conflict which, in lieu of a score of scattered estates, would have arrayed almost every estate in the country against them. Now, at all events, that the conditions agreed upon between us had been amply fulfilled, the moment was come for Parnell's open identification with the movement, if the enthusiastic response already made by the country was not to evaporate as soon as my prolonged term of imprisonment should begin. Accordingly, at a Convention of the Smith-Barry tenantry on the day before my prosecution in Tipperary, I made public the inspiring news that Parnell, with all the powers of his Party, would be found at the back of the new National Insurance combination against the evictors,¹ and at the same time wrote to Parnell that the Archbishop of Cashel warmly welcomed the proposal to begin with a County Convention in Thurles, and begged of him to write a public letter to His Grace without delay,

¹ "It would be premature for me to-day to go into particulars, but many weeks—possibly many days—will not elapse before we can take the public into our confidence and make it clear that we are on the eve of a combination for the protection of the Irish tenantry which will command the assent of the most honoured and most illustrious names of Ireland and which will command the united strength and energy of the whole Irish Party. . . . It is not the first time the landlords of Ireland have been even more stupid than they were cruel. They have put the whole Irish race upon their mettle. They have brought into the field the entire fighting forces of the Irish Party under its illustrious leader, Charles Stuart Parnell. They have given us an opportunity of fencing round these persecuted bodies of Irish tenantry with ramparts of impregnable legality. . . . I hope in a very short time we will be able to place before the Irish people and before the English people, the lines upon which this new Tenants' Defence League ought to go, and of all that possibly the Irish Leader may be able to tell you personally in my place."—*United Ireland*, July 13, 1889.

naming a date for his attendance. A heavy disappointment was in store for the Archbishop and myself. Parnell sent me a letter pleading that the state of his health and his engagements in connection with the sittings of the Commission Court, placed it out of his power for the present to undertake a visit to Ireland, but expressing great satisfaction at the progress already made, and offering to depute Mr. Sexton to represent him at the inaugural Convention. There was no longer time to seek him out in London myself. I despatched a special messenger with a reply in which I reminded him that it was solely on his undertaking to support the anti-eviction movement with his full authority and co-operation, I should ever have dreamed of appealing to the people of Tipperary or to the Archbishop to take action; that both had responded not only with an enthusiasm which guaranteed a universal national endorsement, but with a caution which restricted the combination to a strictly defensive one on Trade Union lines; but that his own promised attendance as president of the opening demonstration was essential if the movement was to attain National dimensions, and that the proposal to depute the duty to any substitute could lead to nothing except heavy disappointment and misunderstanding as to his genuine attitude. Now, as always, I recognized his supreme right to decide. If his mind was made up that the cause of Ireland would be best served by abandoning the project, the Smith-Barry tenants had not yet committed themselves to definite action, and with my disappearance into prison means might readily be found to let the new movement silently die out without discredit to anybody except myself. On the other hand, if he still recognized that the struggle against an iniquitous extermination campaign by Irish rack-renters and English millionaires, offered the best and, indeed, only method available of protecting

thousands of deeply wronged families from destruction, and keeping a firm front to the Coercionists during the depressing interval between us and the General Election, then his failure to give the one unmistakable public testimony required of his sympathy, must inevitably be followed by the collapse of the resistance to the Eviction Syndicate, in the absence of both Mr. Dillon and myself from the people's side, and in these circumstances it would be criminal on my part to tempt the people of Tipperary one step further towards risks and sacrifices foredoomed to end in disaster.

To this no reply was returned when, on August 28th at Clonakilty, I was sent to prison for a term of four months upon a new indictment manufactured out of my speech there.¹ A few days later a confidential message reached me from Archbishop Croke to announce that the valuable interests of the middle-leaseholders of the town of Tipperary were to be sold off and to inquire were the leaseholders to abstain, as they were inclined to do, from making any bid for their property. My reply was that the fundamental condition on which the movement was initiated was the Irish Leader's promise to throw all the weight of his great office into the tenants' scale, and that, unless they ascertained that he was prepared to make that much clear by his promised attendance at the Thurles Convention, I must decline to encourage the Tipperary tenants to face the risks of pushing their protest any further. And pains were taken that my message should reach Messrs. John Redmond, T. P. Gill, and J. J. Clancy, M.P.'s, who had undertaken jointly to assume control of the

¹ The prosecution in Tipperary, as we have seen, was dropped in order to keep Mr. Smith-Barry out of the witness box. The necessity for producing him at Clonakilty was obviated by the new dodge of accepting the publication of my speech in *United Ireland* as sufficient evidence of the offence.

organization during the absence of Mr. Dillon and myself. A deputation of the Smith-Barry tenants was instantly despatched to London in search of Parnell, accompanied if my memory serves, by John Redmond. Their interview, as I learned long afterwards, gave them but scant satisfaction. Parnell renewed his plea of inability to leave London in person, and could not be prevailed upon to go further than his revised promise to depute Mr. Sexton to represent him, at the Thurles Convention. The deputation returned home discouraged and uncertain.

There then fell out a phenomenon of mystic self-devotion, for which no precedent could, perhaps, be found anywhere save in Ireland. While their leaders stood hesitating, the people of Tipperary became their own leaders, and in a transport of divine madness confronted the Eviction Syndicate with an uprising that completely outstripped my original programme by its fanatical daring, and all but fabulous unselfishness. I had not proposed to go further than the old Land League formula of "compelling the landlord to collect his rents at the point of the bayonet"—that is to say, by the odious and intolerably costly method of marching an army from cabin to cabin to extract at the last some wretched dribble of rent, after overcoming the thousand resources of bloodless popular resistance, the while a sympathetic British democracy would be looking on through their members of Parliament and newspapers at the inhuman spectacle of what misgovernment meant in Ireland. The people brushed aside all such old-fashioned devices. Mr. Smith-Barry's Tipperary agent—the most astute of a firm of land-agents, Messrs. Hussey and Townsend, who had exercised their sinister trade with pre-eminent ruthlessness throughout the Land War in the South—

believed he was acting under an inspiration of genius, when he postponed proceedings against the rural tenants for the present in order to strike a brainblow at the leaseholders and shopkeepers of the most flourishing inland town in Ireland. He quite otherwise provoked a resistance which made Tipperary the world's wonder. Men whose middle interests brought them substantial yearly incomes forfeited their leases rather than pay a headrent of a few pounds to the organizer of the Eviction Syndicate. Shopkeepers who had built up an enormous business in houses, mostly erected and equipped with their own money, declined to make the smallest bid while their property was being confiscated, and the notices to quit executed against the homeless Ponsonby tenants were being showered on their own heads. The wealthiest merchant in the Main Street rivalled the humblest dweller in the back tenements in the determination to make the grand evictor taste at his own door the bitterness of the devastation decreed against the victims of the Syndicate, were his town and theirs to be reduced to a wilderness as void as the people of Moscow left to be the grave of their conquerors. They resolved to forsake the town altogether for a New Tipperary, which they proceeded to found upon an adjoining property. They contracted with an eminent firm of Dublin builders, the Messrs. Meade, at a cost of £20,000, to construct a Mart to which the evicted shopkeepers could transfer their business, and a whole system of residential streets was to be added. The Tipperary Butter Market, one of the most famous in the world, was withdrawn from Mr. Smith-Barry's market house, and carried its volume of thriving trade to the new town. So with the Town Hall and the Municipal administration, the weigh-house, the schools. Every week saw the amazing spectacle of prosperous traders one after the other shutting up their shops, and transporting thousands of pounds

worth of merchandise to improvised stalls in the Mart, until in the long run there was scarcely a populated house left in Mr. Smith-Barry's town except the police barracks, and a curse from on high seemed to brood over his silent streets. In the historic words which Archbishop Croke addressed to the tenants, "Tipperary had realised the ideal." It was the first example of "the sympathetic strike" which has since made such a stir in the world, but it was a sympathetic strike ineffably freer from any stain of personal or even class selfishness than any the world has beheld since. For it was not a question of equality of sacrifice; even the farmers of the Golden Vale had incalculably more to lose than their brethren of the distant estate they were befriending, and had every temptation to wrap themselves up in their own selfish security. The shopkeepers who risked their fortunes and quitted their homes in a sublime access of altruism were not, most of them, farmers at all, and the amount of their rents was an inconsiderable trifle compared with the tremendous pecuniary sacrifices now before them. The poor labourers of the back streets, in quenching their little home fires, without any shadow of hope of recompense for themselves, but, on the contrary, with the full knowledge that they had only to throw in their fortunes with their powerful landlord to be loaded with rewards, made, perhaps, the most heroic sacrifices of all. There was something sacramental about it all, something of the ecstatic devotional movements of the Middle Ages, which, if it seemed to spurn all calculations of human prudence, did so under one of those inspirations of a higher wisdom which once in an age thrills an entire community with the divine thirst for sacrifice of a more lowly Calvary. These stern-eyed, rawboned, unemotional-looking giants, with a dash of Cromwellian truculence in their hot Gaelic blood, proved themselves heroes and martyrs without even suspecting

their own greatness. A more wondrous thing still in a county where, traditionally, vengeance followed wrong as promptly as the bullet followed the flash, the town was evacuated, and the occupants of some two thousand happy homes set out for the wilderness, without a blow struck or scarcely an angry voice raised, as in the silent solemnity of some awe-inspiring religious function.¹ It will have been seen that for the shape the Tipperary struggle had now taken, I had not the smallest pretension to claim credit, beyond such as may be due to the happy thought of kindling Tipperary to throw its slumbering strength into the breach in an hour of emergency, when all the other forces of the nation were sorely harassed. The idea of a vast population of prosperous townsmen immolating themselves for the sake of a body of farmers in a different county had never once occurred to me, or if it had, would have been dismissed as a chimera. During the four months while the project of a New Tipperary was taking shape, I was a mere marvelling looker-on in Galway jail, dependent upon occasional hints from the good Governor for my only knowledge of the miracles that were in progress. The shopkeepers and merchants

¹ Parnell hastened to identify himself and his Party publicly with the tremendous movement thus spontaneously set going by Tipperary. He repeated his plea that "considerations regarding my health prevent me from coming to Ireland for the opening of the new Tenants' Organisation in Tipperary," but he set forth the objects of the movement with admirable lucidity and force, and invited Mr. Sexton (who was then Lord Mayor of Dublin) to represent him at the inaugural Convention. In the atmosphere of rapturous wonder in which the whole country was enveloped by the action of Tipperary the County Conventions had a triumphant time of it, and the Evictors' Syndicate and their instigators in Dublin Castle found themselves confronted with a universal Trade Union Combination which threatened, if needs be, to raise up a Tipperary spectre at the door of every exterminator in the country.

had parted with their interests, the greater part of the exodus from Mr. Smith-Barry's town had taken place and the contracts for the building of New Tipperary had been signed before I regained any communication of any kind with the men who were directing operations. Still less, of course, could Mr. Dillon, who was in Australia, have conceived the faintest telepathic notion of what was going on. Messrs. Redmond and Gill, who were in constant communication with the tenants on the spot, might with justice claim a brave part in the heroic adventure, but in truth none of us Parliamentarians counted for much more than so many barques tossing on the surface of ocean billows, raised by the instincts of a people lifted to the extremest heights of generous exaltation. When I was again set free, it need scarcely be said, I adopted all the plans and responsibilities of the projectors of New Tipperary without question—with, indeed, a gratitude and admiration beyond bounds—and made it the business of my life to celebrate their heroism to the world, and to court for myself whatever small share of their sacrifices it was within my power to deserve. Mr. Dillon, when he returned laden with funds from our open-handed kindred in Australia, did the same. For the next twelve months, New Tipperary continued to be the proudest battle-ground of the nation; its inconceivable disinterestedness, its dogged tenacity, its incredible calm in the face of provocations that might well have turned more icy blood to flame, became the wonder of the host of British Statesmen and publicists who swarmed over to behold the miracle—Mr. Morley himself, a bigoted zealot for constitutional prudery, could not resist the spell. Ireland herself was watching with the choking sob in her throat with which she saw her handful of heroes hew down the bridge at Athlone before Ginkel's army, or Sarsfield blow up King William's

siege train at Ballyneety. The National Bard, T. D. Sullivan, spoke the feeling of every true man of the race when he sang: "The newest town in Ireland is the pride of all the land!"

Here comes in an episode, which but for its vital bearing upon public affairs, I should gladly pass over lightly "of reverent shame to the mere frailty of man's nature" (to borrow the expression of old Plutarch). Up to the outbreak of the Split in the winter of 1890, New Tipperary was the mainstay of the country's cause, the despair of the evictor and coercionist, the interlude of heroic suffering that must precede a victorious General Election. With the Split came a flood of misfortunes, not in the smallest degree of Tipperary's raising, but of which Tipperary, because the foremost in the battle front, became the first innocent victim. Even those most painfully alive to the meannesses of politics will find it difficult to credit that the first weapon found by partisan malice against myself was to attack and ridicule New Tipperary, which but a month before was "The pride of all the land." When the dissension in the country encouraged the Evictors' Syndicate and the Chief Secretary to rain blow after blow upon the devoted town while it was barely struggling into life, factious malice improved its opportunity by concentrating upon my head all the responsibilities for the misfortunes of Tipperary. That, nevertheless, was what happened. Parnell himself, to whom much injustice of language might have been, in the circumstances of the hour, forgiven, was, of course, of too fine a fibre to turn against me a movement which he had agreed to be, at the moment, the salvation of the Irish Cause, much less to fasten upon me the particular plans for the foundation of New Tipperary to which he knew I was as much a stranger as himself. When that great man was gone, however, John Redmond cannot be as truthfully acquitted of main-

taining a not very creditable silence while his partisans heaped opprobrium upon me for the exodus, and even for the defects in building arrangements as to which he had been himself the people's principal counsellor during the months while I was secluded from all communication with him or them. To myself the offence would have been a tolerable one enough could I have justly claimed the glory of a conception which—whatever its errors of detail—has few equals in the records of man's self-immolation for man. The cruelty of weakening the arm, and giving new heart to the foes of a population, but the other day the darlings of their race, in the hope of getting a foul blow home to a political adversary, had, perhaps, better be passed over with the consolation, such as it is, of Wolfe Tone's acute observation that "no political party will bear a too minute inspection," and least of all when the common cry of curs that infest every political movement have the garbage of widespread national dissension to fatten upon.

"For a' that an' a' that," up to the last moment before the earthquake of the Split opened under the country's feet, the Tipperary struggle continued its triumphant course. If Mr. Smith-Barry made the Ponsonby estate a desert, a desolation no less awful overspread his own superb town. If Mr. Balfour drafted in the most truculent of his police agents, until there was a policeman for every man, woman and child in New Tipperary—if he developed terrorism to the pitch that a policeman was detached to "shadow" the footsteps of every Nationalist of note, night and day, even of the priest as he administered the last Sacraments to the dying—not a solitary recreant could be found for terror or for money among the people, and the public halls of Britain were ringing with the cry of "Shame!" at sight of the snapshots depicting the "shadowing" and the savage deeds of vengeance of the baffled Coercionists. The new

residential streets were running up, the new shops doing a roaring trade, and Mr. Dillon and myself were making ready for a tour of the United States and Canada to amass funds against which even the exchequer of the Evictors' Syndicate could not long hope to hold out. Mr. Balfour's last throw for victory was to institute a new prosecution for conspiracy against us before a court of his Removables, in order to make our visit to America impossible. As with the rest of his subtle calculations, the trick only served to overwhelm its author with contempt and laughter. From the midst of a besieging army, who had even a special train with steam up in perpetual readiness to pursue our every movement, we found little difficulty in making our way to Dublin and from Dublin in a sailing boat to France, and from France, amidst a storm of applause from the Deputies and newspapers of Paris, to the United States, where the story of New Tipperary instantly took possession of the imagination of that world of idealists, and we were gathering in subscriptions by tens of thousands a night in every great city on our route when—the proceedings in the London Divorce Court and in Committee Room 15 of a sudden darkened the heavens, and all the whips and torments of the black Eumenides descended upon unhappy Ireland.

Even after the worst had happened, New Tipperary and the Plan of Campaign estates were still oases of high principle in a desert of burning sands. So long as the stump of a sword was left they fought on as they did in a united country, although their natural enemies were now joined by native imps of discord who made a mockery of the sacrifices they, a month or two previously, were hailing as the saving of a nation. When accounts came to be finally balanced, Tipperary came by its own again. Not a single tenant in town or country remained dispossessed. The abounding prosperity and population of the re-

occupied old town, which stood crippled for elbow room before the wars with landlordism, was able to flow over into the roomier avenues and terraces of New Tipperary, the fee simple property in which, just as it was on the point of falling into the hands of the Syndicate, was purchased by one who looked not for her reward to human gratitude, and was made the property of the townspeople who had borne the burden of the heroic fight. A flourishing factory now raises its peaceful head above a square where Irish landlordism fought its last ferocious battle, and may perhaps be the most auspicious monument to all time of a struggle which will live to Tipperary's glory as long as the children of Holland will take pride in the tale of how her ocean dykes were pierced to sail Boissot's Armada into the midst of the camp of the Spaniards.

One other incident deserves to be remembered. Mr. Smith-Barry, who with good reason got his peerage as Lord Barrymore from the Unionists as the daring leader of Irish landlordism in its last desperate stand, lived to become the cordial collaborator with his old enemy of New Tipperary in the common endeavour to prevent the Act of 1903, which had already extinguished landlordism over three-fourths of Ireland, from being repealed ere its work was complete, by the Liberal Government and their Irish confederates in 1909, on the pretext of a Treasury economy, which, by the light of subsequent taxation, marked an ineffable depth of meanness on the part of the English Ministers and the Irishmen who joined them in a deed one shrinks from qualifying. The only meeting of Lord Barrymore and myself was on the public platform of the All-for-Ireland League. We met for the sole purpose of supporting amendments of the Bill of 1909 which would long before now have abolished the last trace of landlordism in Ireland, and upon terms which would now be hailed with ecstasy by the hundred

thousand farmers whom the Birrell Act of 1909 has condemned ever since to chafe under their old enslavement. That happy union of classes and interests on the Land Purchase platform in Cork would, it is not rash to affirm, have been followed by a no less blessed accommodation on the question of National Self-Government with the acquiescence of Lord Barrymore and many thousands of the Unionist country gentlemen of whom he was the sagest counsellor. Sir Edward Carson's "Ulster" was at the time still unborn. The adhesion of Lord Barrymore was counted for my own poor part as a more notable achievement than even the proudest laurels of New Tipperary, since it was the visible completion of Tipperary's triumph, and the rich recompense of her sacrifices. Least of all had it occurred to me that my part in the wrestle with Lord Barrymore when he was the most dreaded man in Ireland was of a kind to suggest any faintheartedness on my part now in welcoming him and his as an inestimable accession to the forces of our nation. Nevertheless, hard as even the most travelled in the miry ways of politics may find it to believe, that which might well have seemed the most benign work of my life for Ireland was reproached to me as some monstrous treason. For years, yells of "Barrymore" were the only answer that saluted my arguments wherever the dominant faction were powerful enough to muster a mob for the smothering of free speech. The astounding spectacle was witnessed of a people offered their last chance of freeing their land with one consent from landlordism and from the rule of England voting down their own dearest hopes in the interest of Irish politicians who released England from the only financial bargain favourable to Ireland she had ever lapsed into, and vetoed that solid union between classes and communions for which Ireland has ever since been vainly yearning. And, to the abounding sorrow of us all, the first author of the "Barrymore" cry was one who

ought to have been the last to stain his lips with the dishonesty. Without doubt, the mills of the Lord, if they have ground slowly, have ground exceeding small. The pitiful leaders who started the country on the road to ruin have led their own Party to annihilation at the polls, and have led the shareholders of their sinister newspaper organ into the Insolvent Court, but it was not until they had first slain the great Purchase Act which the "Barrymores" might have saved, and shipwrecked beyond repair the Home Rule settlement by consent which a different treatment of the "Barrymores" might long ago have steered into an unruffled harbour. It will yet, I think, be made as evident to all as the sun at noon that it was those who shouted the "Barrymores" off the scene who brought Carson and his "Ulster" there in their stead. To their factious blindness we owe it that Tipperary's magnificent resistance to the Eviction Syndicate, while that was Ireland's bravest business, was not even outshone by the glory of uniting Evictor and Evicted (as they might quite certainly have been united at the time) in the sublime reconstruction of a Nation.

The gods or the powers that are not gods decreed it otherwise.

Sometimes in the watches of the night there has come the mocking doubt whether every hour of my life was not wasted that was not spent in war upon England, without truce or ruth. With the morning light and reason there came back the answer, but it was a scarcely more depressing one. It was that the party profligacy, the indecision, the falsity, or the criminal stupidity—however deep a disgrace to the English name—of an Asquith or a Lloyd George, a Randolph Churchill or a Lord Salisbury, were less at fault than the fatuity of men whom Ireland in a luckless hour entitled to call themselves her plenipotentiaries. No Irishmen ever before had such sovereign power over this Empire, or so miserably misused it.

CHAPTER XXVII

“ POPULARITY ”

(1890)

By this time the writer had reached a bewildering popularity, the intensity of which no words could well exaggerate. Those who in a severer day described it as idolatry would not have been without some justification for the reproach, if they had not been for the most part among the most extravagant of the idolators themselves, up to a certain date when the tide of fortune, which changed the high calling of Irish patriots into that of politicians, made them iconoclasts. As with most of the other notable events of my life, this popularity was not of my own designing, and, it may quite certainly be affirmed, amazed nobody so much as myself. A shy and awkward stripling, whom not even the rough and tumble apprenticeship of a newspaper man had beaten out of his distressing diffidence, found himself the darling of crowds, and a social favourite, with some mysterious power of impelling to great deeds and of giving comfort in adversity. It is quite true there was always the consciousness of a certain half-developed gift of touching the Irish heart and imagination by what I wrote—the only gift in the competitions of men of which I suspected myself to be the possessor—but that was one to be exercised in a sensitive solitude of soul, and in regions as cloudy if as high as our Irish heavens ; and for the major

portion of my life my pen was now to be a sword, to be wielded in the rough excitements of a lifelong insurrection. But the strangest surprise of all was the development of a power of speech of which not the remotest suggestion had ever visited me until, at a date when youth was already past, I was flung as it were naked into the maelstrom of public affairs. Yet here I was startled into the discovery within me of some mysterious fount of rushing words which not only warmed uncritical multitudes, but were not without their effect upon audiences as un-Irish as the Three Judges of the Commission Court, and, on at least eight or ten notable occasions, swayed the House of Commons in its most august moods and in its angriest. A time actually came when a voice whose vehemence I never learned to control had its music for millions of men and women, and when even a shake of the hand seldom failed to convey an exhilarating cordial of its own. And as commonly happens at the first hint of success, the qualities which inspired inordinate personal enthusiasm, inspired a personal hatred no less unreasoning. All this is a phenomenon sufficiently curious to deserve a conscientious study of its nature and causation, for the benefit both of those who may seek popularity and of those who can dispense it. One who has arrived at a time of life when praise and blame alike are all but as airy nothings as the echoes of a theatre where the drama is over, may, at least, have some hope of making the attempt with sincerity.

The reluctance—it might well be said, aversion—with which I was drawn into public life is attributable to two experiences of my upbringing in the Fenian cycle. One was, perhaps, the gloom of inevitable failure and horrible punishment inseparable from any attempt at separation by force of arms. The second, and far the more repellent, was the miserable mire of recrimination in which beaten movements in

Ireland, and, I daresay, everywhere else, are sure to end. Both the one and the other were brought vividly home to me during the two years when I was induced to make the despairing attempt to bring together in Munster the torn and demoralised fragments of the futile insurrection of 1867. Nothing less seismic than Parnell's arrival on the scene, with his tranquil power of ruling and charming fretful men, could have allured me back into an atmosphere still heavy with the quarrels of the Fenian failures. But it was the all but simultaneous deaths of every member of my family in the latter end of 1878 which above all else silenced for a lifetime every warning voice of failure or of danger in the Irish cause. That group of tragedies coloured my life with an influence akin to that of the worst form of "shell shock" in our modern wars, and for the twelve years that were to elapse before any home of my own was reconstituted, left me too lonely a being to be affrighted by any ordeal of defeat or suffering if only it were incurred for some holy or romantic purpose. Nothing but the brooding spirit of some high adventure, religious, patriotic, or literary, could have filled the void. For a long time religion was the most likely to carry the day only for two considerations; the first, that the spiritual yearnings of my adolescent years were apt to run towards those rigid Port Royal impossibilities of perfection which the youth of every generation preach presumptuously enough to their elders without always following their own instructions; the second and the capital one, that the bare possibility of failure to come up to the mark set for the service of the sanctuary would be the unforgivable sin. The career of letters meant for me to be caught up in the chariot of the sun to the high seats of the immortals; but what was Irish Literature, and what was I, to claim admittance to the starry company of Parnassus? And, for the sake

of truth, it must be added, my readings of the wrangles between the Classics and the Romantics, and between the Romantics and the Realists—some reminiscent of the small vices of the pedants, some of the tipsy perorations of the midnight cafés of the Boul' Mich'—did not inspire an altogether satisfying faith in immortality as a profession.¹

The balance was tipped once for all by the Irish crisis of 1879, when the peasants, every corner of whose homes and every heartrending detail of their struggle for life my investigations as a newspaper man had laid open to me, were confronted with famine and wholesale extermination, and the leaders who rose in a supreme endeavour to save them were struck down by an alien government. There was nothing for it except to fare forward on the road of burning marl and never to turn back again. My main qualification for a post of danger was an indifference to personal consequences so little related to reason as to seem rather sinful than meritorious. My outlook on life to some extent, no doubt, took its colour from a fragility of constitution which disabled me for forty years from ever knowing a day of full-blooded physical health : yet it was an outlook almost quite free from morbidity or even consciousness of individual discontent. I accepted life with the resigned optimism of the penny Catechism as a place of infinite sadness, but not without its balms and brightnesses, where all mankind are mere sojourners on the road to an eternity of larger things. Indeed, when I came to ponder the problems of existence more anxiously, there seemed to me no

¹ The newspaper den was always there as my native haunt, but a time came for the discovery, a little humiliating for a newspaper man *de métier* like myself, that "a few words" burning with the true fire and spoken at the right moment may sometimes have a more enduring effect upon the life of a nation than a prolonged course of leading articles.

more reassuring proof of the truth of revealed religion than that it supplies the only intelligible explanation of the overwhelming sorrows, injustices, inequalities, maladies, partings and perverse ineffectuality of earthly life in all ages, under all systems and, except for a fleeting hour, under the happiest conceivable conditions of health, and power and riches. For that reason alone, if there were no other, Christianity is the only creed that is credible. If the world's unsatisfied strivings and unredressed wrongs innumerable were to end in the darkness of the tomb, humanity could not long consent to accept the blind cruelties of life at all, whilst the journey of life which is only the short *Via Dolorosa* on the way to endless bliss is bearable enough in the footsteps of the Man of Sorrows, who descended from the right hand of the Most High to set us the example of how to endure a divinely appointed Passion. All other attempts to reconcile us to the introduction of the Snake into the Garden of Paradise—whether by the barren self-mortification for mortification's sake of the Stoics, or by the doctrines of Natural Selection, or of the later and still more bumptious biologists who have their sly laugh at Darwin and his disciples, and have their doubts of the law of gravitation itself—yield but small comfort to those of us, who are not professors but dumb-suffering common men.

The same ungloomy resignation which softened the sorrows of life in general extended by an easy analogy to the case of Ireland, whose history, indeed, has been an almost unbroken Way of the Cross many centuries long. For one who has seen the heroes of his young dreams vanish in a bloodstained phantasmagoria of ruined hopes and broken lives, to enter Irish politics was to a certainty to cross the iron gates of Penal Servitude, figurative, if not in brutal fact, since the hopes were long dead of a more shining fate on fields where nations with arms in their hands

win or lose their liberties. Six weeks after I had founded *United Ireland*, I lay under prison bolts, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world ; it was Fate, and a not too unkindly Fate. Half my value in a mortal wrestle with governments of a range of power without bounds and without mercy, was the conviction the enemy soon acquired that I was not to be frightened from my purpose by any considerations affecting my life, if it could only be sold at a price of adequate profit for the country. Insensibility to risks of my own, it must be added, did not prevent me from keeping an anxious eye on the risks of others. Very much the contrary. Danger usually had the effect of clearing my brain as well as steadying my nerves.

Danger from Ireland's fated enemies I took almost with a welcome. The danger I dreaded with a repugnance, which no words can measure, was the tendency of most Irish movements—and sometimes of the very best ones—to degenerate under the corroding influence of defeat into personal bitterness and imputations of the least edifying character. My recollections of the personalities bandied between the Old Irelanders and the Young Irelanders, between the Young Irelanders among themselves, between certain Bishops and Priests and the young rebels of '67, and between the "O'Mahony Wing" and the "Senate Wing" of the Fenian Brotherhood, had filled me with a horror of this side of Irish public life keener by far than was inspired by any power of England to torture or defame. Hence certain fixed resolutions with which I guarded myself against at all events the grossest of these soilures in entering the danger zone.¹ They were, in the main—never

¹ How well-founded was the foreboding may be judged from a passage from my evidence at the trial at which a Limerick Jury found that the only six definite allegations made against me by a prominent personage and by the newspaper which was then his

to accept any position in Irish public life which anybody else could be induced to accept instead of me, never to accept a pound of public money for any personal use, and always so to comport myself that my strongest selfish interest in public life would be to quit it. They were resolutions rather of personal cleanliness than of virtue, and were rendered quite unheroically easy by my inborn shrinking from any public contact and by circumstances (wherein my own volition scarcely figured at all) which ordained that considerations of money—those most cruel darkeners of human existence—never harassed me at any moment of my life. I was never in debt, even during the years while the cares of a sick household rested on my shoulders, and spent all that was mine without even deliberating whether the future was worth providing for. Accordingly, whether my income was £200 or £2,000 mattered but little to one of inexpensive tastes, since it was always spent and was never exceeded. When Parnell sought to laugh me gently out of my resolution to take only half of my covenanted salary as founder of *United Ireland*, during all the years of its struggle with Dublin Castle, he failed to perceive that I was gratifying an idiosyncrasy of my

organ (and which, by the way, as his organ has since perished in the Insolvency Court as he and his party have perished at the polls) was each and every one of them “a false and defamatory libel and published with malice.” The question was put to me :

“Mr. Dillon talks about ‘the William O’Brien Leadership Committee.’ At one time did Mr. Parnell offer to retire in your favour and did you insist upon putting Mr. Dillon in your stead ? ” —“Yes.”

“Did you ever put yourself forward as a leader ? ” —“I have never taken any position in Irish public life that I could find anybody else willing to take instead of me, and the positions I took were so uninviting that I never found any rivals until our success at the Land Conference brought the inevitable results.”

Mr. Justice Johnson.—“You are perfectly right in that, Mr. O’Brien, that is the whole case.”—*An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, p. 369.

own rather than making any serious public sacrifice. On the one occasion when the slender salary that remained did not suffice for payment on the appointed day of my weekly bill for my bedroom on the top floor of the Imperial Hotel, my most original of hosts, Charles Lawlor, departed without a word and returned with a banker's bag full of sovereigns which he tried to thrust into my hands, observing: "I have more money than I know what to do with. Repay this whenever you like, or better still, never repay it at all." The generous offer, needless to say, did not add to my pecuniary indebtedness, but it placed me under a very welcome debt of gratitude to friend Lawlor, which I was never able to repay. Things like this are mentioned to show how little real self-denial had to do with a contempt for money, which, nevertheless, counted for a good deal in qualifying me as a *vacuus viator* for my dealings with the *latrones* of an alien tyranny.

Doubtless, my first approach to popularity, which was purely of the journalistic order, was due to the altogether unexampled resistance to Forster's seemingly easy task of suppressing *United Ireland*. Even after the offices had been raided, the types carted away, and the sub-editors, printers, machine-men, and commercial staff shut up in jail with the editor, or forced to fly the country, the paper continued, until the Kilmainham Treaty dismissed the Chief Secretary from office, to be produced week after week, now in one city of Ireland, England, Scotland or France, now in another, sometimes in two different cities far apart, and, most exasperating circumstance of all, was edited all the time from Forster's own prison of Kilmainham. It was the first time a rebel paper did not go down at the initial assault from Dublin Castle. And the insurrectionary music that young men began to hear resounding in its pages, did not lose anything of its spell because every number went broadcast.

through the city streets, and to the remotest fastnesses of the island, with a price upon its head. These secret labours in jail were the hardest six months' journalistic toil of my life, but they were also the most congenial, for, outside a restricted circle, nobody knew the writer, and anonymity enjoyed the delicious solitariness of a skylark choring in invisible heights.

A new terror arose when a few months afterwards I was compelled to face the public's myriad eyes on the prosaic earth for the first time, and for the first time to trust myself to the unaccustomed weapon of the spoken word in the clash of a fierce electioneering fight for life in Mallow. In another place,¹ I have mentioned that the almost certainty of being beaten was my principal private consolation the day I was sent down on a forlorn hope to contest Mallow against all the powers and treasures of the Castle candidate. Hence it mattered little that I reached the field of battle without a member of Parliament or a practised speaker of any order to accompany me, or that I had already passed through nearly half an average life without testing how far my performances before an audience under the open sky were likely to improve upon the few sentences of feeble incoherences I stuttered through on very rare occasions in response to the toast of "The Cork Press," at some local farmers' dinner. It was the fond recollection of members of my family dead and gone which really saved the electoral situation in Mallow. For many months after it never occurred to me that speech-making could be anything better than an afflicting duty for him who spoke and for those who heard. My first speeches were mostly written essays, delivered with terror, listened to with embarrassment, and not likely to be of much more use in practical politics than robes of stiff brocade worn in the routine

¹ *Recollections*, Chapter XX.

of common life. I can no more tell how the change came about than a non-swimmer plunged in the waves could figure out how he kept afloat until the life-boat threw its rope. But the time did come, when it was no longer possible not to see that I was beginning to be eagerly demanded, and listened to with fiery interest, although—in all likelihood, even because—the stress of daily and nightly necessity put an end to all care for the form of my words, and left little time even for reflection as to their substance. I did, however, to the end give anxious thought, even if the time had to be stolen from the briefest sleep, to speeches of advice or comment on occasions of moment, and seldom omitted the precaution without saying something for which I was tempted to bite my tongue as soon as I sat down.

The secret of whatever power my speeches possessed was, it may be guessed, that they were speeches of action. They arose when action was required, dealt directly with the necessity for action, and took all the responsibilities for proceeding to action without further ado. In this respect they struck forth streams of fire, such as the written word could only faintly imitate in common things. Curiously enough, speeches and leading articles, or, still more, work of a literary bent, took wholly different shape as they emerged from my brain. While it was easy to dictate speeches, as fast as a loving amanuensis could follow them, especially on the eve of action, when the words rushed hot and compact into their mould, I could never succeed, even in the stress and hurry of a newspaper office, in getting off anything with a literary flavour, except with my own hand and with some mysterious interrelation between my pen and the paper, and the sentences as they, so to say, ceased to form part of myself. The two styles—spoken and written—if so pretentious a term may be used, were as different as if they came from different

men. The first time I realised the possession of this new sense, I was hardly less astonished than if the neighbours were rushing in to announce that a hidden treasure had been discovered beneath the hearthstone of my bedroom under the eaves of "the Impayrial." There was a certain spasm of joy in the discovery, but it was a joy destined to be mingled with bitterness down to the last occasion on which I was heard in the public forum. The author who will make me weep—it was, I think, Horace who made the observation—must first weep himself. The pain in my own case was there in more than sufficient quantity. The mere physical distress of public speaking after my manner was extreme. The total lack of elocutionary training I was too old or too careless ever to remedy. Unlike the true orator, who commands his powers with the easy elegance with which he might manipulate the stops of an organ, I spoke not merely with the voice, but with every limb and nerve and muscle of body and mind, with such an excess of strain that hair, collar and inner garments were usually bathed with sweat before I sat down, while my surprisingly effective attempts to make my words travel to the furthest ranks of a multitude, involved a positive danger of which I was painfully conscious without adopting any means of mitigating it. For these pains of parturition, the only consolation to be found was (if the wren may nestle on the eagle's wing) the description of the most famous of Roman orators who was "so earnest and vehement in his orations that he mounted still with his voice unto the highest tunes, insomuch that men were afraid it would one day put him in hazard of his life." The effect, indeed, was sometimes a distraction from the point in debate, to such a pitch that I more than once all but lost the thread of my discourse by being fascinated by the face of pained pity with which some of my listeners would cry: "You are

too hard on yourself ! ” A clerical friend of some acumen used to insist that my true vocation was to be a preacher. If to preach with effect be to suffer, it may be that his judgment was not too ill founded, if upon a first hearing it may sound profane. During the Forster and the Spencer coercion cycles, it was only a question of individual suffering in solitude. There was question now of meeting brother-men face to face, of giving them definite advice to be straightway acted upon, of exhorting them in a great emergency for the country to face risks for them infinitely sharper than those of a battlefield—the levelling of their homes and the cry of children’s complaints—and to assume a full half of the awful responsibility, with a keen sense of the portentous forces arrayed against us, and of the reproaches sure to come from all ignoble tongues at the first hint of ill fortune.

Hence a load of responsibility which would have been unbearable, only that I suffered with the most sorely tried of the sufferers to the utmost extent of my possibilities. Hence also a popularity which became scarcely less burdensome. There is a popularity which ministers to the highest motives of man, and a popularity which ministers to the lowest : a popularity too mean to rank with the harmless vanities of life, and a popularity in some degree akin to martyrdom. You will not find the martyrs of politics to say with St. Laurence that the flames lit by his tormentors did not give him pain but only light, and you will quite surely find Anatole Frances in plenty to suggest even of the true martyr that his agonies on the gridiron were only the Saint’s way of enjoying himself : some fine peculiarity of the nervous structure the absence of which dispenses easy going mortals from quitting their armchairs to follow his uncomfortable example. To flatter the people for their sweet breath, or to affect to rail at them in the spirit of Coriolanus for their fickle love and hate, is an equal

vice in the man who hopes to effect any noble purpose by human instruments. And, it must not be forgotten, the demagogue who outbawls Cleon, the tanner, is not a poorer rogue than the cynic who damps down the enthusiasm of which great deeds are born, as some traitor might water the powderpans of the old flintlocks on the eve of a battle. The truth appears to be that everybody can be popular on condition of making himself thoroughly miserable, and the public usefulness of his popularity is generally in proportion to his misery. It follows that the popularity which does not intoxicate is of the same high order as the kind of unpopularity which does not dismay. If my own share of the petty martyrdoms of popularity was real enough to embolden me to speak of it in some sense as an expert, it must be owned, on the other hand, to be so much a matter of individual temperament—some might even suggest, oddity—that for the generality of sane men the things that were most irksome to me in public life—the everlasting excitement and noise of a life of agitation in Ireland and the inexorable duty of making oneself hateful to the House of Commons—were those that commended themselves to the normal Irish mind as the legitimate compensations and relaxations of a life of public service.

If you want to know a man, quoth the old saying you must study him at home. In “the Impayrial,” which was throughout these forlorn years my only home, there was every external evidence of an enviable popularity, and every conceivable discomfort underneath to belie appearances.

In the street outside there was every other week the commotion attending my departure for prison or attending my return. Charles Lawlor, like another Leonidas, would muster his staff to hold the hall door against the surging barbarians, and to eject the suicidal enthusiasts who swarmed on to the frail iron

balcony as to which, there came invariably at some stage of the proceedings an alarm that it was giving way. Inside, it was the incessant *va-et-vient* of callers—priests or village captains of distant estates to report eviction notices or cattle seizures, and seek advice; English members of Parliament, and women of a splendid courage and devotion, to be instructed whither they were to transfer their services as priceless lookers-on; Mr. Shaw Lefevre to risk his Privy Councillorship in some obscure police scrimmage in Loughrea; W. T. Stead to invite himself to breakfast, and map out some superior plan of campaign of his own, as the somewhat exacting ambassador of the *Pall Mall Gazette*; American interviewers to cut off their pound of flesh in “copy”; Irish-Americans in search of autographs and mementoes, and so *ad infinitum*. Since my evil way with all these was to chat, as it was to speechify, with every bone in my body, and every fibre of my being in full play, the nervous tension came to be so exhausting that a flight to my top room was long my chief luxury in life. Such became my actual terror of entering the great dining-room, where with a deadly certainty, from this table or from that, I should be pounced upon by a country deputation or by some fervid admirer, that one day when, having talked myself, or been talked, to death’s door about the affairs of this, that, or the other scene of battle, I rose to quit the room, Michael, the sympathetic head-waiter, stopped me and pointing to my unfinished plate of soup, whispered: “I beg your pardon, sir, but you forgot to eat your dinner.” As a matter of fact, during two years, it was in my top-room under the slates, I consumed the plateful of meat and the pint of sixpenny claret, which my faithful friend Christy, the “boots,” used to import from the lower regions, the while, perhaps, an outside car was at the door waiting to convey me to a night mail

train, and I was flinging a few things wildly into my dressing-case, always towards the last minute of the last hour, and always at such haphazard, that I counted myself fortunate if there was only one article—a night shirt, a comb and brush or a rug—missing when the journey was over. Poor Davitt was as solitary a pelican as myself, and from his own den on the same landing would sometimes drop in to console me with maledictions on our single blessedness. Mr. Healy was also an ever welcome visitor even when, with eyes upraised, and some droll outburst of mock horror on his lips, he would catch me in the ignominious position of crawling under the legs of the table, or in some remote corner under the bed, in search of a coin that had escaped from me in the course of a game, which had become with me a mild form of monomania. In the fever of some critical leading article, or improvisation for the morrow's speech, I would start to my legs amidst my wilderness of manuscripts and newspapers, to toss a handful of coins like a conjurer in the air, and then penitently sink on my knees to follow up the fallen ones as they rolled into some intricate corner, always with the repentant sinner's vow never to repeat the folly, and always with the sinner's fidelity to his vow. The curious circumstance may be of interest to some therapist, that if coppers would do well enough for ordinary occasions, there was a superior degree of nervous relief in risking a silver piece, or in extreme cases a gold one, according to the importance of the problem to be thought out; and—a sad reflection for human incorrigibility—the folly persists to this day.

All excellent evidence it may be of what the lawyers would call lack of sound testamentary capacity, but happily no question of upsetting a will could have arisen, since there was nothing to be willed except the contents of two portmanteaux that had seen me

through ten years of crowded life, and whatever remnant of presentation blackthorn sticks and illuminated addresses and outworn books the hunters after prize mementoes for American Fancy Fairs had spared.

Let nobody run away with the impression that my immuring myself in my garret was for want of loving and beloved friends to tempt me into more joyous quarters. The Dublin of the day made me free of dozens of houses of refined people who never wearied of bidding me to their genial boards. Their very names make music in my ears, as I repeople these old scenes—most frequently alas! from the world of shadows: Mrs. Deane, in her town house in Great George Street, or, better still, in far Ballaghaderin, where her window-panes shone on a winter night like a glimpse of heaven in the midst of the shivering bogs—Mrs. Deane who was, perhaps, the most capable Irishwoman of her generation, although she would have been the last to suspect it; Dr. Joe Kenny—"that mad Fenian apothecary" of Dick Adams' puck-like pranks—whose beautiful wife and superb old mansion of the Irish Parliament days, made his the most graciously hospitable house in Dublin; "Val" Dillon, whose dinner-table was the dear delight of English visitors, on their way to some scene of eviction or police violence in the country, who were never tired of saying that if the Saxon could only come to know the giant solicitor, as he sat, carving-knife in hand, to dispense the good things with a broad smile as appetising as the best of the viands, he might name his own terms for Irish Independence, and have them with a whoop; and so many others, the hereditary representatives of Irish wit and patriotism—Mrs. John Martin, in whose fearless eyes and spirit one was face to face with her Spartan brother, John Mitchel in his prime—the A. M. Sullivans, the T. D. Sullivans, the Healys, the Bodkins, the Coxes, the Fottrells, and so many more of the fond and simple souls who light up the memory

of that sanguine, if stormtost, time. But although one may hope I will not be accused of being a man of one idea, I was undeniably a man of one idea at a time, and held immovably to the American principle "the first thing first." The terrific exigencies of the struggle that then possessed me day and night, left me no possible conception of pleasure except periods of sheer silence and oblivion, and certainly left no scruple that anybody was suffering by my seclusion. After all this nobody will be surprised to learn that I never became a member of a club, and in all the forty years since my entrance into public life, was never seen in an Irish theatre through sheer terror of being recognised, and made the object of a "demonstration"—whether friendly or unfriendly became an unimportant detail.

Was there, at least, the fierce joy of a good hater whenever we were looking into the eyes of the foe in the English Parliament, and giving blow for blow? My sensations were more complex than that. In the sense of beholding in that arena the figure and substance of the cruel power that for all the long ages since the Crusades tortured, debased and calumniated a race at least their equals in all moral and physical gifts, and only inferior to them in their supply of guns and gunpowder, I detested the name of England with all the white heat of the John Mitchel of the *Letters to Clarendon*. To crush her rule in Ireland was a sacred life-mission to be pursued, come weal come woe, with a will-power that would stand any strain, and could be abated by no terror and by no bribe. During more than the average span of life, the fortunes of Ireland never left my thoughts for a single day and not very often for a single waking hour. And there did not enter into these thoughts any possibility of regret or faltering. At the same time the England of my hate was an abstraction, and an abstraction that, once her grip was loosed of

Ireland, might be transfigured into something very different in the light of a broader democratic day. It was not forty millions of fellow-men born unto sorrow like ourselves with whom my quarrel lay—it was not even the six hundred eupeptic, self-sufficing Saxons on the benches on front of me. But as fate would have it they were the enemy drawn up before us in order of battle with shotted guns, doubtless numbering many fine fellows to be cordially fraternised with as soon as the wars were over, but as to whom, in the meantime, the *consigne* on pain of death for the Irish Cause was to sit tight and to shoot straight. Until we had shot our way to victory, fraternisation would be treason. More than that, by an instinct not too difficult to understand by the light of subsequent events when Parnell's resolute, unconquerable at Cannae, yielded to the softnesses of Capua—when from an Irish Party they became as clay in the hands of the potters of an English Party—my antipathy to the House of Commons and my dissociation from all its inner ways and friendships grew only the more marked, notwithstanding that more than half its members were Home Rulers, and it seemed almost moroseness to refuse to be made friends to and even petted in a House where once we had been howled down with cat-calls and proscribed in every form of outlawry. Ever after 1885, profuse friendship was to be had either from the Liberals or from the Tories, but only on the condition that you must not be friends of both of them, and the Irishman who indentured himself either to the one English Party or to the other was so far lost to Ireland. To be “a good party man” in the English sense was to be a bad Irishman. Be our national failing over-suspiciousness or (as I think) over-softness, at all events, it is not to be concealed that I quitted the House of Commons by the members' entrance for the last time with as whole hearted a detestation

of the place and of the life as on the day I first entered there five and thirty years before, and with a stronger conviction than ever that the House of Commons had not advanced an inch towards understanding Ireland in the interval.¹ And the conclusion may not be the less worth attention because it is arrived at by one who spent more than half of these five and thirty years in risking all the amenities of life in order to help in a reconciliation of the two nations.

What was it then, which made the life just described a supportable one? Firstly, the consolation of Galileo, that, whatever "law and order" might say to the contrary, the world was in motion in the right direction for all that. Self-government and the extinction of landlordism were the fundamental conditions of a wholesome Irish State; the defeat of Coercion was the indispensable preliminary to either the one or the other; and Coercion was already smashed and would be pulverised at the General Election. And my supply of energy towards these ends came in any quantity as readily as a torrent from the mountains. Then there was the purest of all pleasures—the pleasure of giving pleasure. In a state of things in which danger hung over large masses of one's countrymen and even the stoutest hearts sometimes beat low, it was a delicious surprise to discover that there was that in the ring of one's

¹ Funnily enough, my most cherished recollections of the proud Commons of England are of the doorkeepers, attendants, and policemen. Also what could be quainter than the simple English body's unfathomable ignorance of Ireland? Testify my delightful little English landlady in Pimlico who used to sit under a silver-tongued Irish clergyman in a neighbouring church, and who in the earlier days, when the poor lady at the back of her head probably suspected my business in London was not altogether without a whiff of dynamite, used to plead: "You may have anything else you like, you know, but do please leave us our dear Established Church!" Having struck my bargain for the safety of her dear Established Church, she was my firm friend for life.

voice and the touch of one's hand which gave hope to sinking hearts, of a mysterious potency which it is not possible to explain until the subtle psychic current that passes between a man and masses of men in such conjunctures is better understood. Unfortunately that consolation, too, carried its penalties in an exquisite realisation for oneself of the dangers one was conjuring away for others, and in the despair that at certain moments smote one's own heart while one's listeners' cheeks were smiling and their souls afire. I cannot better give some inkling of my meaning than by a reverent quotation from a letter of one of the dozen best women who ever lived to another of that dozen—from Sainte Chantal to Mère Angélique of Port Royal: "God shows me how to give help and comfort, but I myself remain destitute. I talk of God, I give encouragement to others, I write as if I felt all I say, but I do it all with shrinking and revolt." These mystic words from a heavenlier plane have such a tragic message for more earthly consolers!

But at least I was able in the darkest hours to keep so cheerful a face while practising these incomprehensible therapeutics of the soul that a time came when genial cynics, not too sorry it may be for an excuse for watching the fun themselves from their own snug firesides, quite seriously took it into their heads that the chance of "saying a few words" or inhaling the music of a brass band gave me the happiest moments of my life, failing the supreme joy of being in the thick of a bayonet charge or of being dragged from jail to jail.¹ Nothing could exceed the surprise,

¹ An amusing instance in point was a resolution of a brass band in Cork with whom it was my misfortune to differ in my view of the Split of 1890. The resolution was a scathing denunciation of my ingratitude in presuming to differ with "a band that so often played you up to the Jail Gate." What was to happen *inside* the Gate after the musicians had marched off to supper, the poor fellows happily forgot to take into the reckoning.

and, one may hope, relief of these good people when they discovered that my complete withdrawal from public life brought me the only period of health and peace of mind in a perfect home that ever fell to my lot. It is none the less true that, although mine was a sufficiently sombre philosophy to make me, many a time, in the zenith of my popularity, reflect at what short notice the mad plaudits that came up to me on the platform might turn to hootings, the affection of my countrymen had *quand même* something of the sacredness of communion with the soul of a nation. Having begun life with an infinite faith in human nature, I am ending it with an infinite pity for its inborn foibles, and an infinite admiration for the high purposes, the insuppressible hopes and the myriad courageous activities which sustain men in a world only tolerable for the generality of human kind by reason of its transitoriness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN OLD-FASHIONED ENDING

(1890-1920)

When the Split of 1890 broke the national forces asunder, Englishmen in general came to the extraordinary conclusion which has served as history ever since, that Mr. Balfour's coercion *régime* was a success. Nothing could be more absurdly unlike the truth. *Non anni domuere decem, non mille carinæ!* Mr. Balfour's administration was in the last stages of defeat and discredit, when a tragedy of misunderstandings among his victorious Irish adversaries enabled him not only to conceal his overthrow, but to turn the country's disruption on a wholly new issue into an appearance of triumph for himself. The irrefutable facts are these :

1. He anathematised and undertook a war to the death against the Plan of Campaign. He was compelled within a year to embody the substance of its demands in an Act of Parliament, without succeeding in breaking a single Campaign combination in the country.

2. He undertook to have at least his revenge by refusing the Plan of Campaigners the benefit of the Act they had extorted from him, and clearing the Campaign estates of their whole population. Each of the evicted bodies was maintained unbroken, in sight of their homes, and supported by public funds even during the worst horrors of the Split, and Mr.

Balfour lived to witness the reinstatement of the entire body of evicted tenants as owners in fee simple.

3. He sought to justify a brutal Coercion Act by calling it a Crimes Act. He was forced to recognise that the Plan of Campaign succeeded, not as an instrument of crime, but by, for the first time in Irish agrarian history, extirpating every trace of crime or outrage wherever its power extended.

4. Finally, he made it the cardinal point of his policy to break the spirit of his political adversaries by treating them not merely as criminals, but as men more guilty than illiterate criminals. In every particular in which they asserted their claim to be regarded as political prisoners, it was he who in the long run, and with every circumstance of gracelessness, yielded, and it was they who tore his Prison Code to tatters.

From the detested enemy of Ireland, Mr. Balfour was rapidly becoming its laughing stock: his five thousand prisoners were the most envied men in the country, his proclamations suppressing the League were made the regular Sunday sport of the "suppressed" Branches in every village, his Draconic Press laws were openly defied by the Nationalist newspapers, among which there was not a single caitiff.¹ The amazing success of our mission to the United States, it is now clear enough, would have been the last blow to his hopes either in Ireland or with the British electorate, had not the catastrophe in the London Divorce Courts, quick as a lightning stroke, turned away the eyes of the world from everything except the disruption of the entire Nationalist organisation. Father Healy, the noted wit, questioned one day by Mr. Balfour: "Do the Irish people really hate me, Father Healy, as much as they say?"

¹ The Press Clauses had only to be set at defiance to perish of their own extravagance. It was estimated that for the systematic weekly offences of *United Ireland* alone, I had rendered myself liable to 1,800 years at hard labour.

made the reply : " All I can tell you is, if they hated the devil as much, my occupation would be gone." In after years we all learned to form a softer judgment of Mr. Balfour, as the author of the Congested Districts Board, and of the County Government Act of 1898, and the leader of the Government which passed the great Act of 1903, transferring the ownership of the soil of Ireland to the people. The change was his, not ours. His real success in Ireland lay not in coercing, but in conceding, for each of these wise measures was a slice taken from the Nationalist programme of his early aversion, and far the greatest of the three could not have been passed at all without the active collaboration of the men whom he began by devoting to destruction as a sort of *hostes humani generis*.¹ Mr. Balfour might have gathered still more precious Irish laurels (and to Ireland, after all, he owes the most considerable work of his life) if he and Lord Salisbury had not in 1904 recanted their half-promised authority to Wyndham to undertake a Home Rule settlement by consent by the same methods, and in the same spirit, which had so prodigiously succeeded in bringing the far more envenomed Land War to a happy close.

All was now to be changed. When the Divorce proceedings were first made public in the beginning of 1890, six months before our departure for America, in reply to an anxious and sympathetic letter to Parnell, I received an answer which gave me the first authentic glimpse how much reality there was

¹ " I have felt that the conditions of Irish political controversy precluded me from communicating with you. I have regretted this. For I have often wished to express to you personally, and to express in public, my sense of the loyal—I would say chivalrous—manner in which you stuck by the spirit as well as the letter, of the agreement between Classes and Parties on the Land question, which alone made the Act of 1903 possible."—Letter of George Wyndham to the present writer, April 14, 1908.

in the rumours which had long been the sport of the scandal-mongers. The letter is, so far as I know, the only revelation ever made by Parnell of his own view of the true inwardness of the O'Shea action :

“ London, Jan. 14, 1890.

“ MY DEAR O'BRIEN,

“ I thank you very much indeed for your kind letter, which I shall always highly prize. If this case is ever fully gone into, *a matter which is exceedingly doubtful*, you may rest assured that it will be shown that the dishonour and discredit have not been upon my side.

“ I trust you will not allow anything to interfere with the certainty of your being able to be present at the opening of the session.

“ Believe me,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ CHARLES S. PARNELL.

“ I was most anxious to write to you sooner, but have been overwhelmed with law and other business, and have also been deprived of Campbell's help, he being laid up with influenza.”

It was no longer possible to doubt that the scandal-mongers would not wholly miss their prey. Neither was there much room for mistake for anybody familiar with the repute of Captain O'Shea as to what was meant by the ominous words : “ *If this case is ever fully gone into, a matter which is exceedingly doubtful.*” It is now undisputed ground that, if Parnell had been allowed to go into the witness-box, as he passionately, and all but at the point of a physical encounter with Sir Frank Lockwood, claimed to go, there could have been no Divorce decree. Ireland's hereditary doom to go on stumbling from one tragedy to another without any fault of her own, was clinging to her more pitilessly than ever. Parnell, as we now know, was lost because he picked up a rose dropped from an Englishwoman's bosom at his feet on her first meeting

with him in the House of Commons. He allowed this woman's selfishness to banish him from the witness-box, to his ruin and his nation's.

A still worse stroke of fate was to follow. Even after the Divorce Court proceedings there need never have been a Split. The agonies of a ten years' Split were incurred by Irishmen, rather than dismiss Gladstone to his political grave when he declared that "the continuance of Mr. Parnell at the present moment in the leadership of the Irish Party . . . would render my retention of the Leadership of the Liberal Party, based as it has been mainly upon the prosecution of the Irish Cause, almost a nullity." The astounding revelation is now made to us that these words were, on second thoughts, struck out of his draft letter by Gladstone himself, and were only restored for reasons having no relation to any morals better than electioneering morals on the insistence of an Englishman whose fidelity to the Irish Cause was trusted even more than Gladstone's own by Ireland, and indeed to the end by Parnell. Of all men, the fatal stab came from Brutus! The words which exacted from Ireland the cruellest sacrifice in all her pitiful history, and wrecked her hopes for a generation, would never have seen the light if Gladstone's own judgment had not been over-ridden by Mr. John Morley, of all faithless human kind.¹ However, there were still

¹ In his *Recollections* (Macmillan, 1917) Viscount Morley makes his extraordinary confession (which was withheld in his *Life of Gladstone*) in these words: "At 8 to dinner in Stratton Street. I sat next to Granville, and next to him was Mr. G. We were all gay enough, and as unlike as possible to a marooned crew. Towards the end of the feast, Mr. G. handed to me, at the back of Granville's chair, the draft of the famous letter in an unsealed envelope. While he read the Queen's speech to the rest, I perused and re-perused the letter; Granville also read it. I said to Mr. G. across Granville, 'But you have not put in the very thing that would be most likely of all things to move him.' Harcourt again

a spring, a summer and an autumn before us during which our hopes were at their highest. O'Shea might, as Parnell anticipated, flinch from the ordeal, or he might leave the court a man too deeply disgraced to be worth further public notice. The one contingency which no imagination could conceive was a quarrel between Gladstone and Parnell which would split a united Irish race asunder, and a quarrel which, as we now know from the man who precipitated it, need never have occurred.

And now to gratify children, old and young, with a happy ending of the present book in the old-fashioned way. It is not really an end ; there were still twenty-five years of toil and trouble to be endured by my wife and myself, before we could reach a home of peace ; but, for the " happy " part of the description, it is as ineffably true as anything can ever be that is written of a world where " man never is, but always to be, blest." An indefinable influence had come into my life during my Galway imprisonment of 1889. Some communications had reached the Governor from a lady in Paris which he strained his duty so far as to put into my hands. There was some subtle spell about these little messages, written though they were in a strange

regretted that it was addressed to me and not to P., and agreed with me that it ought to be strengthened as I had indicated if it was meant really to affect P.'s mind. Mr. G. rose, went to the writing table, and *with me standing by, wrote, on a sheet of Arnold M.'s grey paper, the important insertion. I marked then and put under his eyes the point at which the insertion was to be made and put the whole into my pocket. Nobody else but H. was consulted about it or saw it.* Had the Irish Party been made aware of the facts now divulged by Lord Morley, the scenes in Committee Room 15 would never have taken place. Ireland's reputation for chastity stood in no need of defence. The hypocrisy of the Liberal politicians can only be measured by reflecting what would have been their own action, if the proposal were one to cashier Nelson, on the eve of the Battle of Trafalgar, because Lady Hamilton's husband had called at the Admiralty to make his complaint.

tongue, which the Governor's all but paternal love of his prisoner invested with a romantic interest. His instinct was a swifter one than his prisoner's own. I at first regarded them as of no deeper moment than the messages of the many noble-hearted women, Irish and foreign, whom a fight for freedom always charms to the side of the hard-set swordsman. They were such slight things, and yet of such incomparable womanliness—sometimes a verse or two from Racine or Browning, unforgettable as the "eagle's feather" of the *Memorabilia*, sometimes a pressed flower with its own perfumed meaning, or again a box of French chocolates, whereof by a woman's instinct, the dainty ornamentation of the box was even sweeter than the sweets. By degrees I came to learn, although in the vaguest way, that my correspondent was a Russian lady, Madame Raffalovich, who hospitably extracted from me a promise to pay her a visit whenever I might find myself in Paris. Still the Governor's romantic insight rather amused than impressed me, and the messages from Paris were largely jostled out of my mind by hundreds of similar kindnesses, and by the innumerable prosaic anxieties that awaited me the moment the jail gate was crossed.

A month or two afterwards I was in Paris, on my way to the Riviera, where a villa had been placed at my disposal by Madame Venturi, an Anglo-Italian lady who sat out the Parnell Commission Court from its first day to its last, with the unwearied and unrewarded fidelity of which women only have the gift. Dr. Kenny and Tom Gill, who were in Paris with me, were as keenly interested as had been the Governor of Galway Jail in my mysterious correspondent, and insisted on accompanying me on what I supposed would be the formality of making my promised call. The address brought us to a vast detached mansion in the Avenue du Trocadero, the doorway crowned by a far-spreading *marquise*, and the carriage approach

barred by massive iron railings. Appearances were daunting, and my own spirits were not raised when as we rang a great bell tolled twice overhead, and two statuesque valets appeared on the perron, promptly as geni of the *Arabian Nights* at the clapping of hands. I am afraid it was with a certain selfish relief I learned that Madame was not at home, though we were informed she was expected back at any moment. I left my card with the sense of duty cheaply done. My own decision would have been without hesitation to write a civil letter of excuse, and leave the matter there, an excellent pretext having just presented itself in a telegram urging me to give up my trip to the South, and return to Tipperary without delay to deal with an urgent crisis that had arisen suddenly there. Joe Kenny's curiosity was now, however, rising to fever heat; he urged the rudeness of returning charming kindness by an empty pretence of a call, and there would still be time to catch the night mail from the Gare du Nord. Mrs. Kenny and he ultimately prevailed on me to call back before quitting Paris. But for their happy insistence, I should most certainly never have returned to the Avenue du Trocadero, and should have missed the one overwhelming personal happiness of my lifetime.

The presence of more than one party to the exquisite messages to Galway had never once suggested itself, and I suffered myself to be shepherded by the genial Doctor to my new duty-visit with no more cheerful anticipation than that of a political chat in my limping French with some doubtless most indulgent fine lady. I was already beginning to stumble into the discovery, clear enough to me now by the experiences of many a charming year, that my hostess was one of the most distinguished women in Europe, both for beauty and for intellectual power, when the door opened and her daughter Sophie entered the room. What followed there are no words consecrated

enough to describe. For me, the heavens visibly opened, and there descended the Guardian Angel who has ever since enfolded me in the healing shadow of her wings. An angel, too, of action as well as of wisdom, whose footsteps left a shining track of inspiration and hope as they went. Human nature would be the better, if it were possible in language that would not be a desecration of the holy places, to tell of the hidden life of one who has made Wordsworth's lines :

“ Nor hath she ever chanc'd to know
That aught were easier than to bless ”

ring through my life like a never ending hymn. But only one pen could attempt the task with the necessary delicacy and the necessary reserve, and I fear me, to expect that hers should touch the theme would be to expect a violet to write of her life in her woodland nook, or a Sister of Charity to publish abroad the beauty of her ways. More than one holy person has suggested that her intervention in my lonely and hunted life was the reward of a certain tender intercessor on high. It would be presumptuous to accept this as an explanation of how an All-Seeing Power dispenses His unsearchable decrees of good or evil fortune among men. One can only bow a reverent head before the eternal secret. But this remark, at least, I can with knowledge make, that had the fondest prayers that even a mother's love could utter been heard, she could not well have supplicated for more of human blessedness for her son than the supreme event of my life brought with it.

Often enough, especially since my release from public cares, has come the thought that it would be almost a meanness to taste the sweets of health and peace of mind, and an ideal home, as I am doing,

were there not forty years of almost unbroken ill-health and feverish labour and evil usages of all sorts behind to redress the balance in God's great share-dividing account between the things that make men rejoice and the things that make them suffer. I can only humbly pray that, for all the children of men, the Cross may be as richly recompensed by the Crown !¹

¹ Wilfrid Blunt's note of my marriage to Sophie Raffalovich by the Archbishop of Cashel may be of interest to more than ourselves, for it was the last occasion on which the greatest ecclesiastical leader and the greatest lay leader of the Irish race—with the entire array of Parnell's marshals and russet captains—eighty-two out of a possible eighty-four—were destined ever again to meet together in unity.

"June 11th, 1890. To London to attend William O'Brien's wedding. This was a really wonderful event and has lifted me once more to a higher level. It is all very well to scoff at the age in which we live, but the Catholic Irish are a standing miracle of God's grace. I should say there has never been—certainly not in the last hundred years—a political party so pure in its purposes. Along with them, from Dr. Croke to Dr. Duggan, you have a second army of high ecclesiastics, and no doubtful man among them for honesty and virtue. To-day's wedding was the apotheosis of this high-mindedness. Dr. Croke, in giving the pastoral benediction, said to William O'Brien : ' I have no advice to give you, for you need none.' The truth is, he has led an absolutely virtuous and unselfish life from boyhood up, allowing himself no pleasure and almost no rest. He (O'Brien) alluded to this very simply and pathetically in his speech returning thanks afterwards at the wedding breakfast. It was in his best and most subdued manner and made many a man there shed tears. I saw Dillon weeping fairly and T. P. Gill and even two or three battered old Radical M.P.'s had a kind of moisture in their eyes. . . . Parnell made an excellent speech, dignified and graceful, and delivered in the best Parliamentary manner. It raised my opinion of him immensely, for hitherto I have rather underrated his intellectual qualities. Dillon's was less good, rough-hewn and in part awkward, like the speech of one ' unaccustomed to public speaking.' By far the best, however, was Dr. Croke's. This was astonishingly outspoken and full of wit and tenderness. . . . He paid compliments to Parnell, who, he said, had made him a Land Leaguer. He spoke of William O'Brien as the best of men and the dearest

of his friends. He told the story of his conversation with the Pope in 1882 and professed generally his determination to go on fighting for Ireland, all laws notwithstanding. Parnell's speech, everyone said, was the best they ever heard him make, as it showed some heart, which is generally absent from his speeches. Certainly all he said of O'Brien was graceful and even affectionate, besides being extremely well delivered. Altogether this wedding festivity has done me good and put me back once more on the higher lines of thought a noble cause inspires. . . . On this pleasant note I am glad to close my Irish memories. The crash came not six months later."—*The Land War in Ireland*, pp. 447-8.

POSTSCRIPTA

A few days before our wedding, fate made me the central figure in a desperate affray between police and people in Tipperary. Before our honeymoon trip was over, I was again on my way to prison. I wonder will my readers face with equal equanimity the change from the story of blithe comradeship and abounding hope I have been trying to tell to the agony of fratricidal discord that was to follow? In the new wars even victory brought no exhilaration except to meaner minds, and the wounds were no longer to be those of clean bullets, but of poisoned arrows. Nevertheless, the popular shrinking from the duty of investigating the causes of political dissensions, in place of bewailing them, acts in reality as a principal means of encouraging dissensions, for in repelling sensitive minds it gives a free let to coarser ones, and thus deprives the country of the remedy of calm and well-informed public judgment, which in all free communities, must be the ultimate test of right or wrong, of truth or falsity in public affairs. A consultation of surgeons might as well agree to ignore the disease rather than touch upon an unpleasant topic. Ireland is not the only country that is from time to time shaken by political dissensions. It is, on the contrary, the only one where public criticism is not held to be of the essence of freedom. What is wanted is not an end of controversy, which will never come in Ireland or anywhere else until there is an end of all things, but more refinement and a broader toleration in its methods.

Pray, then, let us recognise that next to the offence

of those who originate dissensions comes that of a public that shirks the duty of placing the responsibility of the evil on the right shoulders with the temperate courage that can form its judgments unobscured by the small party passions of the moment. Let us see whether, so far as the time is ripe for a final adjudication, the reasons why the tremendous forces enlisted on behalf of Ireland before the Split of 1890, and again in far vaster measure while the Home Rule Government of 1911-1916 were in power came to so disastrous a defeat, cannot be briefly enumerated without any heat unbecoming a high controversy, or any severities too hurtful for any living politician of average nerve. To shut our eyes altogether to the causes of the failures of the past twenty years, as the Irish public chose to do until the Insurrection of 1916 broke out, would be to ensure their repetition, and would not be a mark of good nature or of patriotic virtue but of moral debility in a nation.

I. FROM DISCORD TO A WIDER NATIONAL UNITY

In another volume (*An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, Macmillan, 1910) the present writer has told the story of the succeeding twenty years from the great Split to the eve of the five years during which the Irish Party were in uncontrolled possession of the House of Commons, while the veto of the House of Lords had ceased to exist. The twenty years covered in that narrative divide themselves into three memorable periods.

1. 1890-98, while Parnell's old Party were rent asunder by a Split from which they were never to recover. These were eight years of unredeemed blackness and horror upon which no Irishman of any of the three contending factions can look back without shame, and few English Liberals without remorse.

2. 1898-1903, when the foundation of the United Irish League, in face of the hostility of the heads of all the sections, healed, by a process little short of a miracle, the festering wound of the Split, and the new Unity bore fruit in an event, of which the magnitude is only now beginning to be realised. I refer to the Land Conference of 1902-3 which, with the consent of Irishmen of all classes and denominations, and of the Imperial Parliament of all political parties, ridded the country of a feudal landlordism which was the first and most accursed institution planted there by England. And nothing but the infatuation of a handful of Irish politicians prevented the abolition of Landlordism from broadening down more easily still to an agreed measure of National Self-government by the same methods.

3. 1903-10, during which the work of the Land Conference was brought to a stop while only half done, and the movement of Irish Unionist opinion towards Home Rule was arrested by a virulent campaign against our "hereditary enemies the black-blooded Cromwellians" just when the Unionist minority were already more than half won to Irish ideals. For the union of all political parties, Irish and English, was substituted once more the dependence of Irish politicians upon one particular English Party, thereby laying the foundations for the downfall of Irish Parliamentarianism after five years of sickening disappointment and betrayal.

The first calamity—The Split of 1890—Lord Morley's Confessions now make it abundantly clear, need never have taken place at all, had Parnell, on his side, and his antagonists in Committee Room 15 on theirs, taken measures to ascertain Gladstone's real judgment, and insisted upon its prevailing against the purists of Mr. Schnadhorst's electioneering Caucus. Both sides—thanks to Mr. Morley's culpable reticence and to some extent to their own remissness—entered

on the conflict under a complete misunderstanding concerning the vital point at issue. Must Parnell's continued leadership involve the discontinuance of Gladstone's? We know now that Gladstone deliberately struck out of his letter the passage which gave rise to the belief that it would do anything of the kind. The passage which caused the Split was only restored at Mr. Morley's dictation.¹

Unhappily, the blunder ranking next to Mr. Morley's exhibition of electioneering virtue behind Gladstone's chair was the spirit in which the conflict, once entered upon, was conducted. Parnell's retirement, if it then seemed to be (under the fatal misconception of Gladstone's real mind) the only alternative to the abandonment of Gladstonian Home Rule, ought to have been claimed with the loyal reluctance and tenderness befitting such a demand in the case of so great an Irish leader. It was, on the contrary—not without grievous faults on both sides—insisted upon in Committee Room 15 with a fury and with

¹ It was only twenty-seven years after the event that Lord Morley revealed the secret of the disaster and his own amazing part in it: "At 8 to dinner in Stratton Street. I sat next to Granville, and next to him was Mr. G. We were all gay enough, and as unlike as possible to a marooned crew. Towards the end of the feast Mr. G. handed to me, at the back of Granville's chair, the draft of the famous letter in an unsealed envelope. While he read the Queen's speech to the rest, I perused and reperused the letter, Granville also read it. I said to Mr. G. across Granville: 'But you have not put in the very thing that would be most likely of all things to move him,' referring to the statement in the original draft that Parnell's retention would mean the nullity of Gladstone's leadership. Harcourt again regretted that it was addressed to me and not to P., and agreed with me that it ought to be strengthened as I had indicated, if it was meant really to affect P.'s mind. Mr. G. rose, went to the writing table, *and with me standing by, wrote, on a sheet of Arnold M.'s grey paper, the important insertion. I marked then and there under his eyes the point at which the insertion was to be made and put the whole into my pocket. Nobody else besides H was consulted about it, or saw it.*"

weapons of desperation over which it will be the study of all good Irishmen henceforth to draw a merciful veil. However unavailing may be the speculation, the thought must always haunt us with a pang, how far those of us whom the crisis surprised in the United States might have succeeded in introducing a calmer temper into the controversy had we been free in its first stages to exercise with our leader and our colleagues an influence the extent of which at the moment those of a new day will be little able to conceive. By a tragic mischance, we could not have landed in Ireland or England without instant arrest, and sentences of six months' imprisonment would have to be gone through before we could communicate in person with the actors on the agonising scene upon which the country's fortunes for a generation were being decided. Those who care to go deeper into the facts will find in the volume above referred to, the story of how the best effort at peace-making it was in our power to make was frustrated by the rivalry of both sets of extremists in misrepresenting "the Boulogne negotiations," and at the last moment by Mr. Dillon's disastrous passage of arms with Parnell, which put an end to the attempt just as it had been brought within a handsbreadth of success.¹ Upon that black Chapter no more need be said.

¹ My own point of view at the time will best be understood by confidential letters exchanged between the Archbishop of Cashel and myself after my arrival in Boulogne which are now for the first time published. They may help to show what a tide had to be breasted by those of us who strove for a rational accommodation with Parnell before the scabbard was once for all flung aside.

CONFIDENTIAL.

The Palace, Thurles,
December 19.

My Dear William,

I cannot say welcome home to you, for the Lord knows Ireland is no fitting home for any decent man to-day.

I write you now, as your staunchest and truest friend, to implore

of you to lend no ear to Dr. Kenny or to his companion, who would lead you astray and induce you to effect a *compromise* with Parnell in this dreadful Irish business.

Parnell has hopelessly fallen. The Bishops and Priests and all good men are determinedly *against* him, and his future leadership, under any conditions, is absolutely impossible, so far as they are concerned.

How then can you touch him? What good can he do? See how he has acted towards Gladstone and our English Allies. Do not recede a bit from the attitude of declared hostility to him. He will be beaten in Kilkenny on Monday. He will, therefore, be prepared for a compromise. If victorious he would not think of it.

So for God's sake and country's sake and conscience's sake, be staunch and steady and no surrender.

Yours always affectionately,
✠ T. W. CROKE.

The following extracts from my lengthened reply (Boulogne, January 12th, 1891) must suffice:

"I avail myself of T. C.'s return to let your Grace know what is going on. How I wish the explanation could be given at your own fireside instead of in this stiff and hurried scrawl. I don't complain if some of our impetuous friends take me for a fool and an eater of my own words. It is a situation of such miserable anxieties all round that there can be no infallibility and no freedom from sharp judgments on any side. But Parnell so little misunderstood me or my position that we did not exchange a single sentence except on the basis of his retirement as an inexorable necessity of the situation. I am not at all sanguine our efforts will be successful—we have to contend with such a ferocious spirit of no quarter on both sides, and worse still a spirit which unites both of them in proclaiming no quarter for peacemakers. What is certain is that the terms now available offer in my judgment the only possible escape from a loathsome civil war, a hopeless disruption of the Party, a bedevilled General Election, and hell upon earth for the country for many a bitter year. . . . It was myself P. desired to have for his successor as a personal satisfaction that was intelligible enough. I had actually to break off conversations before Redmond and the others could get him to assent to Dillon. His consent to do so is a marvellous concession, and ought to put an end to any possible difficulty on Gladstone's part about giving him the private and confidential assurances he requires on two points as to the future Home Rule Bill which we all know to be vital, *viz.*, the Land Question and the Constabulary. It is no longer possible for a Liberal Cabinet to shirk making up their

For the uprise of the United Irish League from its small and disheartening beginnings in the remote West, the reluctant submission of the sectional leaders to a unity which had been effected without them, and the semi-miraculous success in establishing a wider national unity by means of the Land Conference, students of contemporary history must be referred to the same volume. All that need be placed in its proper proportions here is the fact which lies at the root of all Ireland's misfortunes during the last twenty years, culminating in the disappearance of

minds on these points. . . . Securing P.'s retirement as a necessary national sacrifice is one thing—hunting him down like a wild beast and hacking him to pieces with all sorts of foul weapons is quite another thing, and, believe me, is an absolutely detestable thought for hundreds of thousands of Nationalists who are just as convinced as we that wisdom demands P. should make this sacrifice. The fatal mistake of our friends, Irish as well as English, is to imagine the battle with P. is all over with the Kilkenny election. We are only in the beginning of a conflict which P. calmly contemplates carrying on over a long series of years, if he should live for it. Your Grace, I think, knows that it is with some knowledge of every force and current of national opinion I tell you, it is as certain as anything human can be that although he will no doubt be beaten at the polls in a majority of the rural constituencies, in the beginning at all events, he will not only rally the hot-headed youths but hundreds of thousands of the best men in the country to his side, if his offer to give way to Dillon on certain private assurances that all Nationalists know to be indispensable should be flung back with insult in his face. . . . We have a dozen excellent front-bench-men in our Party, but there is no other Parnell. They all mean well, but it is not the same thing. The stuff talked of Parnell's being a sham leader, sucking the brains of his chief men, is the most pitiful rubbish. . . . If the war is to go on, at all events until Parnell's offer is fully tried out, I can see nothing before us but utter crash, panic and defeat, and villainous defamation, with split after split, that will postpone the hopes of Ireland to another generation. Your Grace has it in your power, not now for the first time, to save the Irish cause by an opportune word in the right quarter. Trust your fondest friend, there will be no act of your great life that you will afterwards look back upon with so much pride and thanksgiving."

Parliamentarianism after it had fallen into a condition of irredeemable decay and disrepute. The fact referred to is that Ireland, having been rescued from eight years of unspeakable discord, without any aid from the politicians, was presented with perhaps the fairest opportunity in all her history for completing the realization of her ideals as a nation, and lost it through the ineptitude (let us use the most compassionate term) of the same group of politicians. It was in the *saturnia regna* of Lord Dudley as Viceroy, of George Wyndham as Chief Secretary, and of Sir Antony MacDonnell as Under Secretary. They had in concert with the combined Nationalists and Unionists bound the Treasury to transfer the ownership of Ireland to the people by means of State loans bearing interest on the now fabulous terms of $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. More fortunately still, it is now certain that they had induced Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour, and Lord Lansdowne to approve of the first steps towards following up the Agrarian Settlement with a Home Rule Settlement by consent, conceived with the same breadth and generosity. A reunited Irish Party, did they only continue to be animated by the spirit of the Land Conference, were in a position to compel the Liberal Party to second the Irish Policy of the Unionist Government, as Gladstone had long before offered to do. The Ulster difficulty which was afterwards to overshadow all others, had its virus so effectually extracted at the time by the happy influence of the Land Settlement on the Ulster gentry and the Ulster farmers alike, that its voice was no longer heard save through half-a-dozen fanatics of little or no public weight, except with their Orange following in two or three of the great towns. As time goes on and the proofs accumulate of the unexampled propitiousness of that opportunity it will become one of the most perverse enigmas of Ireland's destiny that the opportunity should have been wilfully destroyed by Irish hands.

Such, nevertheless, was the astounding thing that happened as the upshot of events in the third cycle above specified, viz., 1903-10. Three men and a newspaper "launched a determined campaign" (to adopt the description given by one of the three) for the destruction of the Land Conference settlement, and of the men who won it. Two of the three had long withdrawn from the Irish Party altogether. The most influential of "the determined campaigners" appealed to his own constituency against the policy unanimously endorsed by his Party. He denounced the Act of 1903 which in Wyndham's own words the Land Conference "alone made possible" as "a landlord swindle," which he prophesied was "bound to end in National insolvency." He ridiculed as "a Methodist new birth" those awakening sympathies with Irish ideals among Irish Unionists, which now, when it is too late, no price would be thought too extravagant to purchase. In the newspaper, which was placed at his service, he strove by daily misrepresentations of the finances of the Act (which like the rest of his prophecies, results have mercilessly belied) to terrify the farmers into rejecting, for the sake of a brawl over a half year's purchase, the offer of a fee-simple which would now fetch them 40, 50, or even 60 years' purchase.¹

¹ "Attempts have been made to throw the blame on Michael Davitt, *The Freeman's Journal*, and myself, and it has been said that we have delayed the reinstatement of the evicted tenants and obstructed the smooth working of the (Land Purchase) Act. I wish to Heaven we had the power to obstruct the smooth working of the Act more than we have done. It has worked too smoothly—far too smoothly—to my mind. . . . Some men have complained within the past year that the Act was not working fast enough. For my part I look upon it as working a great deal too fast. Its pace has been ruinous to the people."—Mr. Dillon at Swinford, September 12th, 1906. Davitt was entirely consistent in obstructing any land legislation other than Nationalisation of his own extraordinary pattern, and the sincerity of his opposition was

In the long run when Wyndham was overthrown and the Liberals came in, Mr. Dillon succeeded in cancelling the most fortunate financial treaty ever obtained for Ireland, and with no better excuse than a paltry Treasury saving less than was squandered in any week of the Great War. He cancelled with it that solidarity of Irish classes and religious denominations which nobody has ever since been able to re-establish. The wrongheadedness of the whole thing seems at this distance of time to pass belief, but the record is there indelibly written, and the ruin was accomplished before the country was suffered to understand in any but the most confused way what was happening.¹

respected. The same excuse was not available for Mr. Dillon or for the third of his partners in the destruction of the Act of 1903, neither of whom was a believer in Land Nationalisation. Mr. Sexton had abandoned the public cause many years before when its fortunes were at their lowest. He obtained the managership of the Party organ, *The Freeman's Journal*, upon a pledge not to interfere in the editorial direction. For reasons it would be painful to discuss, he conceived a violent dislike of the Land Conference Policy, and in violation of his promise turned the Party organ over to Mr. Dillon's campaign of destruction, at a time when the Irish Leader, Mr. Redmond, and the Party almost to a man, stood firmly pledged to that Policy. To complete the paradox of the situation, as we shall see in a moment, the revolt of Mr. Dillon and of the Party organ was carried on to the cries of "Unity!" and "Majority Rule!"

¹ Mr. Dillon's hostility from the start to the Act of 1903, and his subsequent confession in private how completely its results had falsified his anticipations, may be best understood by two parallel passages from his confidential communications with Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, who, from his book, *My Diaries, Part II, 1900 to 1914*, seems to have been his most intimate confidant.

May 5th, 1903.

"John Dillon came to see me early and gave me his views of the situation very frankly. *He spoke last night in support of the Bill*, but he tells me that

March 31st, 1910.

"Dillon spent an hour and a half this morning with me. . . . He told me a number of interesting things about Ireland. *Wyndham's Land Bill*

A more impudent performance still, it was all effected to the war cries of "Unity!" and "Majority Rule!" These cries were raised against the men who were carrying out the policy solemnly ratified again and again by a United Party and a United Country. And they were raised by three or four disappointed politicians who had themselves trampled upon every principle of "Unity" and "Majority Rule" when they began the revolt against their leader, their Party and the policy the country had all but unanimously adopted as its own.

John Redmond's tame submission to the threats of "the determined campaigners" must, I am afraid,

but for loyalty to his party he should be inclined to oppose it in Committee and vote against it on the third reading. His view is that it is useless trying to get the landlord class on the side of nationalism, that they would always betray it when the pinch came, *that the land trouble is a weapon in nationalist hands, and that to settle it finally would be to risk Home Rule, which otherwise must come*" (page 56).

has had the effect of changing the whole character of the peasantry. Instead of being careless, idle, and improvident, they have become like the French peasantry, industrial and economical, even penurious" (page 309).

This was Mr. Dillon's confidential opinion of the Act, which according to his public prophecies was to bankrupt the country and kill nationalism. A more astounding thing still, his confession was made a few months after he had been himself the principal agent in repealing, by the Birrell Act of 1909, the Wyndham Act of 1903, and consequently putting a stop to the benign revolution to which he did such homage in private conversations. How little wiser was his prophecy to Mr. Bourke Cockran that "if the Land Purchase Act of 1903 were allowed to work, there would be an end of the national cause before six months," may be judged by the present unprecedented strength of Nationalism of the most robust type seventeen years after three-fourths of the soil of Ireland has been transferred to the ownership of the people.

be debited with the principal responsibility for the catastrophe. All his countrymen honour the name of Redmond as a high-minded Irish gentleman, of sober judgment and respectable ability, but few except the uninformed English of the War years are likely to mistake him for a resolute Irish leader. Those worthy English Parliament men actually took it into their wise heads that Mr. Dillon's revolt which overthrew the policy of Conciliation in 1904 was really a revolt by myself against the leadership of Redmond, and have never taken the pains to unlearn their grotesque mistake! As it happens, Redmond could never have been elected to the Chairmanship of the Party had not Mr. Dillon's opposition to the choice been counteracted by my own active exertions in his favour. As a matter of fact, Redmond declared to his Party with the utmost frankness again and again that he and I were in perfect agreement in policy until my withdrawal from Parliament at the end of 1903, and that withdrawal would never have taken place had he been able to make up his mind to take a firm stand against the threats of one malcontent member of the Party to "take the field," and to "rend the Nationalist ranks asunder," if the policy Redmond believed in as profoundly as I were persisted in.¹ Redmond chose to retain the leadership

¹ Redmond's timidity about taking action at the time when action would have averted all the subsequent troubles may best be illustrated by a letter of his own, published now for the first time, after the *Freeman* had begun its revolt against the authorized National policy, but before Mr. Dillon had publicly committed himself. I proposed to Mr. Redmond to submit the following resolution to the National Directory:—

"That as the National Directory is the body authorized by the Constitution of the United Irish League to decide upon all matters of National policy within the country, we invite those newspapers which claim to represent the Irish Party and the United Irish League and the interests of National Unity to give a loyal and cordial support to the above resolutions which the

by abandoning the lead. In the words of his own too famous apophthegm, he practised the doctrine: "Better be united in a foolish and short sighted policy, than divided in a far-seeing and wise one." He *did* keep the Party united, but upon a policy which ruined the country, and eventually ruined the Party itself as well. He followed his followers in treating as "a prisoner in a condemned cell" a Chief Secretary

National Directory have adopted with the object of giving effect to the policy of conciliation which has been solemnly endorsed by the National Convention, by the Irish Parliamentary Party, and by the almost unanimous voice of the elective Nationalist bodies of the country."

Redmond's decision (or rather indecision) was conveyed in the following letter:—

"Gresham Hotel, Dublin, 7th Sept., 1903.

"PRIVATE.

"My Dear O'Brien,

"I have been turning over the enclosed again in my mind and the more I think of it the more I am inclined to disagree with the policy of openly attacking *at this moment*.

"I feel quite certain from what Dillon has more than once said to me that he would feel bound in honour to come out openly to defend Sexton and would, I am sure, say he approved of all the *Freeman* had said and done. This I would regard as a most disastrous thing. It would be taken by the whole country—friends and foes alike—as an end of Unity in the Party, as it would really be. If such a calamity be forced upon us we must face it, but I am dead against our issuing a direct challenge such as this would be, nor do I see any need for it at this moment. When the Directory speaks and when we take the platform, all misunderstanding of the situation will speedily disappear in the country, and if the *Freeman* attacks us—a most unlikely thing—we can deal with it then. *If we had a daily paper we could rely on, the situation would be different*, though even then I would be against this resolution. I hope you will think this over again. My view is quite clear and I am dead against it.

"JACK—J. E. R."

While Redmond hesitated (and it is only too certain, because he hesitated) Mr. Dillon acted, and before another month placed himself openly at the head of the "determined campaign" against the policy of his Party.

fresh from the abolition of landlordism, and quite notoriously ingeminating a similar Home Rule Settlement, and he and they combined with Mr. William Moore's small Orange group in the same voting lobby in the House of Commons in order to execute the capital sentence. Nobody who knew Redmond can be in any doubt with what a secret pang he put an end to Wyndham's Irish policy and to his career, at the bidding of the authors of "the shortsighted and foolish policy," who after some more years of shortsightedness and folly, put an end to his own career no less treacherously at Mr. Lloyd George's "Irish Convention," and expiated their follies at the General Election a few months later by undergoing an ignoble extinction themselves. The proofs of every statement here made are set forth in full in *An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History*, and no attempt was ever made to refute them.

II. THE UNDOING OF HOME RULE

The time has not yet come for dealing with the subsequent period (1910-20) in which the Home Rule problem was treated by the Liberal Ministry and their Irish followers in a way that resulted in the total repudiation of Parliamentaryism by the Irish people. The narrative would include the publication of secret documents and confidential communications of various kinds which cannot in existing circumstances be properly disclosed. God willing, I will not fail at least to amass the materials for such a volume to see the light in its own ripe time. Certain salient points thrown into relief by the events of this period are, however, essential to an understanding of present developments.

1. The Irish question from being the business of both English Parties, became once more the exclusive

property of one particular English Party (the Liberals) with the consequence of forcing the other—and, for an Irish settlement the more powerful—Party into an opposition which was fatal.

2. The Irish Party, whose breath of life was freedom from English party domination, completed their dependence on the Liberal Party by voting themselves into Parliamentary salaries which the English Chancellor of the Exchequer could cut off any year he pleased. Result : five precious years during which the Irish Party were in a position to dictate their own terms to the Government of Mr. Asquith, were squandered in miserable procrastination and indecision, and in the final betrayal of Ireland's integrity as a nation, winding up with the well merited effacement of Mr. Asquith and his Irish accomplices from public life, and the rise of Irish Republicanism.

3. By a course of wicked personal vituperation of every Irish Unionist of the type of Lord Dunraven and Lord Rossmore, Col. Hutcheson Poë, and Mr. Moreton Frewen, who had come over to the principle of Home Rule, and were patriotically paving the way for their class to follow, the hope of a Home Rule settlement by consent, after the manner of the Land Conference, was extinguished.

4. The open organisation of the United Irish League was supplanted, as the real governing force in Ireland, by a clandestine organisation, bound together by a solemn vow of secrecy, and by their own mysterious signs and passwords, the membership of which was expressly limited to Catholics frequenting Catholic Sacraments. This was a body of seceders from the American Ancient Order of Hibernians, who set up for themselves in Ireland under the official title of "Board of Erin" Hibernians, and became better known under their own favourite cognomen of "the Mollies." Consequently, the national movement hitherto founded upon a brotherhood of interest

and affection between Irishmen of all religious denominations, was transformed into a secret sectarian organisation which, in addition to the control of the machinery and funds of the public organisation, ultimately became possessed of enormous masses of government patronage for the reward of its members. The evils of Orangeism were thus redoubled by the creation of a Catholic Orangeism which, without any authority from the Catholic Church, and in violation of the first article of the Constitution of the United Irish League,¹ as well as of the whole tradition of Irish patriotism, aimed at engrossing all offices and honours for disciples of its own particular creed.

5. The ignorant have long allowed themselves to be persuaded that it was Sir Edward Carson who created the Ulster Difficulty. Investigation will yet show that it was the appropriation of the national movement by the Board of Erin Hibernians which really created Carson's power, by terrifying Ulster Protestants and Presbyterians with the bogey of sectarian exclusiveness as the dominating power in Nationalist Ireland.

6. When finally in 1910 a Liberal Government was placed in power for the express purpose of "conferring full self-government upon Ireland," with an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons at its beck, and a House of Lords reduced to impotence, the first precious year of a five years Parliament was wasted in obliging Mr. Lloyd George with an Insurance Act of no other interest to Ireland than that it conferred a considerable endowment on the Board of Erin Hibernians.

7. When at last a Home Rule Bill was pro-

¹ "That in the words of the Constitution of the first club of United Irishmen in 1792, 'this Society is constituted for the purpose of forwarding a brotherhood of affection, a communion of rights, and a union of power among Irishmen.'"

duced of such a character that all sections of Irishmen were afterwards united in repudiating it, the Liberal Government and the Irish Party scoffed at every proposal of our small All-for-Ireland group, for the satisfaction of all reasonable apprehensions on the part of Ulster—proposals which, when it was too late, they offered themselves on bended knees, and which, when we foreshadowed them in the House of Commons, Carson's most influential lieutenants publicly avowed might win the consent of Ulster.¹

8. Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Government first blundered by setting their faces against any concessions whatsoever to the *particularismus* of Ulster, and treated the whole thing as "a gigantic game of bluff"—a game of playing at soldiers with "wooden guns"—which the Hibernian Grand Master (Mr. Devlin) undertook to dispose of in the streets of Belfast "if the military and police would only stand aside and make a ring."² Mr. Asquith and his Irish followers next blundered into the opposite extreme of panic-stricken surrender as soon as Sir E. Carson had armed his Covenanters with German guns. Having undertaken, through Mr. Churchill, to "bring these grave matters to the test, by letting the red blood flow," the fleet which was ordered to Lamlash, within striking distance of Belfast, was recalled, and General Gough and his mutinous officers at the Curragh Camp were obsequiously guaranteed that they would not be required to march to Ulster to enforce the law of Parliament. From

¹ "My friends and myself have always marvelled at the fatuity of the Irish Party in throwing over the Member for the City of Cork at a moment when he had all the cards in his hands."—Mr. William Moore M.P.

² Mr. Devlin, who once clamoured to the police and military to "make a ring" that he and his Hibernians might make short work of "the wooden guns," took a wofully different view of them as soon as the wooden guns were turned into German rifles and machine guns.

ridicule and insult, the Home Rule Government and the Hibernians in their panic committed themselves not merely to the acknowledgment that the Ulster rebels stood above the law, but they made the one concession which the Irish race would shed the last drop of their blood rather than submit to. They bought off Sir E. Carson by agreeing to surrender six counties as his share in the Partition of Ireland, and by their votes they concurred with Mr. Asquith in pronouncing as "unthinkable" any attempt to establish a Parliament of the Irish nation against his will.

9. The first bargain for the establishment of a separate Orange State was made at a Conference at Buckingham Palace, which was a gross caricature of the kind of Conference that put an end to the Irish Land War—a Conference where the representatives of Nationalist Ireland were only two in a body of eight, and one of the two the arch enemy of the Land Conference, and of the Policy of Conciliation. The concession of four counties to Sir Edward Carson at that Conference, was the source of all the disgraceful evasions, postponements, and acts of treachery to Ireland which were the inevitable sequel of the formal recognition of the right of his German gunmen to defy the law.

10. Nor was this the temptation of a cowardly moment. After eight months more for deliberation, the Liberal Government and their Irish followers

He has since blurted out that, when the shivering Government were apparently making up their minds to close with Sir Edward Carson, it was Mr. Devlin's advice which determined them to yield to the Orange leader at discretion. Captain Wedgwood Benn having in the session of 1919 taunted Sir E. Carson with his threat that if Ulster was coerced he intended to break every law that was possible, there followed this illuminating interchange :

"Sir E. Carson : I agree that these words are perfectly correct.

"A Labour Member : Anyone else would have been in prison.

"Sir E. Carson : Why was I not put in prison ?

"Mr. Devlin : *Because I was against it.*"

reaffirmed the surrender of Ireland's immemorial integrity in the aggravated form of an Orange Free State enlarged to six counties, never to be revoked save by a fresh Act of the Imperial Parliament. Nay, the so-called representatives of Ireland this time stipulated that the existing Irish Party must automatically form the first Parliament of the three provinces that would remain after the mutilation, without giving the Irish people the smallest voice in the transaction and in the meantime they made a desperate attempt by sheer Hibernian hooliganism, to thrust the shameful compact down the throats of their adherents in Ireland.

11. A situation was thus created which, it is no longer doubtful, had its share in precipitating the world war. The Kaiser doubtless first counted upon an Orange rebellion to paralyse the arm of England, but the Partition bargain made him still better assured of a Republican one. Baron Von Kuhlman's acumen must have been strangely at fault if his Envoy in Ireland was not able to make it clear to his Majesty that, although Carson had got his price, the storm of indignation let loose in Ireland by the astounding crime of partitioning the nation which the Government and the Irish Parliamentarians had been placed in power to endow with "full self-Government," was bound to produce a rebellion upon a vastly larger scale from the Nationalist side if cargoes of Mausers, such as were shipped to Ulster, in the *Fanny*, could now be put into the hands of three hundred thousand Irish National Volunteers thirsting to be even with their betrayers. "Whether Cassio killed Othello or he killed Cassio," the Kaiser "honest Iago" as he was stood to win, and took his steps accordingly. If Sir Edward Carson had been squared, Sir Roger Casement was still available. Whenever Englishmen realize all these things they will I think, be as furious as the Sinn Feiners who rose in Easter Week.

12. The Act was only placed "on the Statute

Book " at all upon the public pledge of the Liberal Prime Minister and of his Irish followers, that it would never come into operation until after the passing of an Amending Act which could only be a Partition Act, and the group of All-for-Irelanders who refused to make ourselves parties to that infamous compact by our votes, were denounced by the triumphant Hibernian hooligans on the benches of the House of Commons, and throughout Ireland, as "factionists" and "traitors." After which, the Irish Party with the power of life and death over a Government explicitly returned for the purpose of "conferring full self-Government upon Ireland," sacrificed Ireland's last chance by consenting to "The Home Rule Government" giving place to a nondescript Coalition mostly anti-Irish, without a word of protest or an attempt to make conditions.

13. With the outbreak of the war in 1914 came another chance for Ireland, and it was no less mournfully mishandled. Two courses were open to Ireland, either of which might have brought her incalculable advantages. Either, in the exercise of her legitimate right as a nation, she might have held altogether aloof from a power which had so basely betrayed her, or she might have cordially thrown her sword into the balance upon adequate guarantees for her national freedom at the Peace Conference. Unluckily, Redmond neither took the one course nor the other, or rather assumed a facing-both-ways attitude that combined the disadvantages of the two. The War-speech which his enraptured English listeners so ludicrously misconstrued promised nothing except that if the British army was withdrawn and his Volunteers armed by the War Office, they would undertake to "defend the shores of Ireland" against whom, or with what programme, he forbore to specify. In order to live up to the English reputation thus amazingly earned, he did attempt the formation

of an "Irish Brigade" for service abroad with the Allies; but while his recruiting speeches were made indoors to middle-aged moderados, his open air speeches to reviews of his Volunteers were pitched wholly in the-Defence-of-the-shores-of-Ireland key and were, of course, interpreted by his listeners as a hint to keep their arms for home service. He assuredly intended no conscious deceit. The pity was he did not quite definitely know what he intended. His advisers rejected with scorn a proposal of my own that we should all join with the friendly Irish Unionists in concluding a rational Home Rule treaty under the imperative pressure of the emergency. I was enabled to offer him the co-operation of almost every leader of the Southern Unionists worth counting in striking up such a treaty upon a twofold basis—viz., no Partition, and the joint enrolment of an Irish Army Corps, which Mr. Asquith himself had specified to be the reasonable contribution of Ireland to the Allied forces. My offer, made at the request of Redmond's own chief supporters in Cork, did not elicit even the courtesy of a reply. His waverings and balancings met their reward in the ignominious collapse of recruiting for his "Irish Brigade." The principal practical effect of his recruiting speeches was to goad the Sinn Fein Volunteers to prepare for a genuine armed rising after their own reading of "the defence of the shores of Ireland," and a bewildered England bestowed more gratitude upon Carson's solitary "Ulster Division," than upon the five hundred thousand individual Irish Nationalists scattered unspectacularly through the various armies of the Allied and Associated powers. By the half-hearted tactics of Redmond's advisers the maximum of disadvantage for Ireland was combined with the maximum of profit for England, which ended the war unfettered by any sort of engagement to extend to Ireland the fine principles of self-determination for the small nation-

alities which found eloquent expression in England so long as the attitude of the United States remained undecided.

14. With the desperate necessity for cajoling America into the world war came the crowning act of British hypocrisy, and of Hibernian complaisance. On each occasion when we of the All-for-Ireland League were ourselves called into council, we were prepared with precise suggestions which, when they see the light, may be left to tell their own tale. Enough to mention here that the four essential conditions of an actual settlement (if any actual settlement was ever intended by Mr. Lloyd George and his Coalitionists) were in our view these : (a) a Conference of ten or a dozen representative Irishmen, known to intend peace ; (b) a prompt agreement making every conceivable concession in reason to Ulster, with the one reservation that Partition in any shape was " inadmissible and unthinkable " ; (c) the immediate submission of the agreement to a Referendum of the Irish people (never before consulted upon a definite proposal) ; and (d) if any considerable minority of irreconcilables still muttered threats of an Ulster rebellion, a bold appeal by the Government to the British electorate at a General Election to declare once for all between reason and justice, and their incorrigible foes in the North-East corner of Ulster. I was even fortunate enough to be able to guarantee that to a Conference of this type, and animated by such a spirit, *Sinn Fein* would have sent a powerful representative, and thus saved us from the ludicrous predicament of Mr. Lloyd George's " Irish Convention "—that it represented everybody except the Irish people. The proposal was set aside—whether by Mr. Lloyd George or by Redmond's advisers has yet to be revealed—and Ireland and America were humbugged by setting up a nominated " Irish Convention " so constituted that it could not by any

possibility come to any agreement except an agreement for Partition. Nobody with inner knowledge will now seriously dispute that, but for the sweeping successes of *Sinn Féin* at the Roscommon, Longford, East Clare and Kilkenny elections in that critical hour, an agreement for Partition must assuredly have been the result. Nine-tenths of the members of Mr. Lloyd George's "Irish Convention" consisted of delegates of the Ulster Party, and the Hibernian Party, both of whom had twice over pledged themselves to a compact for Partition. Mr. Dillon's complaint in the House of Commons was that the bargain had not been "rushed hot-foot through the House" before the Irish people could have had time to interfere. "Rushed hot-foot" through the Convention it would infallibly have been had not the *Sinn Féin* revolution at the polls struck terror to the hearts of the seventy-five Hibernians who composed the majority of that extraordinary assembly, only one of whose "Nationalist" members of Parliament survived the General Election, as probably not one of its extra Parliamentary "representatives" will survive their contact with their constituents at the Local Government Elections from which they have been sheltered for seven years. The "Ulster" Partitionists in the Convention occupied a still more outrageously undemocratic position. They were the mere puppets of an invisible power behind the throne—"the Ulster Unionist Council" in Belfast—who were not even present at the Convention, but put an instant extinguisher upon their delegates the moment there was whisper of any agreement other than the Partition agreement, of which *Sinn Féin* had forbidden the banns.

15. The result was a Convention which, for all except its last sittings was a farce, and in its last sittings produced a tragedy. But its proceedings furnished a signal indication of the wisdom of the

procedure suggested by those of us who declined Mr. Lloyd George's invitation to participate. For, after six months wasted in amiable mutual Blarneyfication—while in obedience to Lord Birkenhead's hint they "kept on talking" for the edification of America—the moment the unwieldy assembly came to business they found themselves up against a stonewall, the only escape from which was to do precisely what we of the All-for-Ireland League had counselled from the first—namely to transmit their powers to a small Committee of Nine. How effectual this plan of a small Conference of well chosen notables might have been, had it stood by itself, was proved by the success of the Committee of Nine in formulating heads of agreement which beyond dispute, commanded the secret approval of the three Ulster representatives—The Marquis of Londonderry, Mr. Barrie, M.P., and Sir A. McDowell. But no sooner was the agreement submitted to the secret Orange conclave in Belfast, than the enlightened judgment of their three nominal representatives was summarily overborne, and the possibility of including Ulster in any agreement other than Partition was instantly at an end.¹

¹ Of John Redmond's extraordinary lack of foresight in this matter, Lord MacDonnell furnishes us with a painful illustration (Letter in *The Times*, November 2nd, 1919): "In regard to this episode I well remember the late Mr. Redmond saying in conversation that *if he had foreseen the possibility of a proposal made there being submitted for judgment to men who had not participated in the Convention's proceedings, and were removed from its pervading atmosphere of good will, he would never have consented to enter it.*"

How obvious was the danger which escaped the attention of the Leader of the Irish Party may be seen from a passage or two from the letter of the present writer, published in all the newspapers at the time, giving his reasons for declining Mr. Lloyd George's invitation to him to name two All-for-Ireland delegates (June 18th, 1917):

"On the other hand, while my friends and myself would welcome the most generous representation of the unofficial Unionist population of Ireland, the Government scheme ensures to the Official

16. And now for the scene of genuine tragedy on which the curtain fell. Redmond made a last attempt to rally a substantial majority of the Convention in support of a compromise which had much to recommend it, and it should have commanded the support of three-fourths of the assembly including the influential contingent of the Southern Unionists led by Lord Midleton. The proposal fell short of Dominion Home Rule, but it would have marked an

Ulster Unionist Council a full third of the voting power in the Convention—*under the direction, moreover, of a Committee not present at the Convention, but specially nominated by the Council to supervise its proceedings from outside.* The terms of the Resolution under which the Ulster Unionist Council consented to enter the Convention make it clear that they have only done so as a war measure and relying upon the assurance of the Government that they need fear no Parliamentary pressure if they should adhere to their demand for the exclusion of the six counties as a minimum—a demand, indeed, which was conceded to them last year by the Irish Parliamentary Party. It is consequently obvious that the chances of any agreement by the Ulster Unionist Council other than one based on the separation of the six counties are all but hopelessly handicapped from the start.”

That Redmond should have waited until the Convention had been seven months in session before making the discovery is all the more astounding a proof of want of perspicacity that I made bold to forewarn the Government and himself in the House of Commons of the consequences of a Convention so constituted in the following terms :

“ If you break down now—I pray you not to delude yourself on this point—if you break down now you will not kill the Irish Cause, but you will kill any reasonable chance for our time of reconstructing the constitutional movement upon an honest basis. You will kill all Irish belief in this House or in any Party in it. You will set up the right of rebellion whether for the Covenanters or the *Sinn Feiners* as the only arbiter left in Irish affairs. You will justly make Parliamentary methods even more despised and detested than they are at the present moment by the young men of Ireland. You will force the Irish people, sorely against their will, to turn their eyes altogether away from this Parliament to the supreme tribunal of European and American democracy and humanity.” (May 21, 1917).

important advance by a weighty body of Irish Unionist opinion, and would at the worst have been a decisive repudiation of Partition. The result is described by a not unsympathetic hand in Captain Stephen Gwynn's book : *John Redmond's Last Years* (page 321) :

"I met Redmond on night of January 14th. He had seen no one in these ten days. He told me that he was still uncertain what would happen, but asked me to get one of the leading Co. Councillors to second his motion. Next morning I came in half an hour before the meeting to find the man I wanted. When I met him he was full of excitement and said : 'Something has gone wrong ; the men are all saying they must vote against Redmond.' Then it was evident that propaganda had been busy to some purpose.

"When Redmond came into his place I said : 'It's all right, Martin McDonagh will second your motion.' He answered with a characteristic brusqueness : 'He needn't trouble ; I am not going to move it, Devlin and the Bishops are voting against me.'

"He rose immediately the chairman was in his place. 'The amendment which I have on the paper,' he said, 'embodies the deliberate advice I give to the Convention. I consulted no one, and could not do so, being ill. It stands on record on my sole responsibility. Since entering the building I have heard that some very important Nationalist representatives are against this course—The Catholic Bishops, Mr. Devlin and others. I must face the situation, at which I am surprised ; and I regret it. If I proceeded I should probably carry my point on a Division, but the Nationalists would be divided. Such a division would not carry out the objects I have in view, therefore, I must avoid pressing my motion. But I leave it standing upon the paper. Others will give their advice. I feel that I can be of no further service to the Convention, and will, therefore, not move.'

“ There was a pause of consternation. The Chairman intervened, and the debate proceeded and was carried on through the week. . . . No one can overstate the effect of this episode. Redmond’s personal ascendancy in the Convention had become very great. . . . The Ulstermen had more than once expressed their view that if Home Rule were sure to mean Redmond’s rule, their objection to it would be materially lessened. Now they saw Redmond thrown over, and by a combination in which the Clerical ascendancy, so much distrusted by them, was paramount.”

The sinister shadow of Hibernianism, which had brooded over all the misfortunes of the country in the previous years, fell heavy on the last scene of Redmond’s life. Precisely the same influences which daunted him into the abandonment of “ the far-seeing and wise policy ” of 1903, confronted him now in a final effort to reconstruct that policy, even in a feebler and less promising form, as the only escape for the country from a failure which ought to have been foreseen. The very same men whom he had been weak enough to countenance when they were punishing me for my fidelity to that policy by the blackguardism of the Baton Convention, and of a scarcely less blackguard party Press, now turned to administer a last stroke to their leader himself, and dismissed him from the hall of the Convention to his death-bed. As their bargain for Partition had broken down, they played their last card for the forgiveness of the country by recanting all their idolatrous praises of “ the Act on the Statute Book,” and affecting a sudden passion for Dominion Home Rule. Mr. Lloyd George was the only winner by the gamble of his Irish Convention. It had served the purpose of keeping America amused for nine months until President Wilson was corralled into the war, and it was always possible to pretend (most falsely) that

the breakdown was due to Irishmen's inborn incapacity to find a settlement for themselves. Nemesis did not lag far behind in the track of the Hibernians. John Redmond was not many months dead when the General Election at last arrived. By one of life's little ironies (or, who knows? by the decree of a diviner justice) the party of 74 who had long ridiculed and brutalised our own humble group of 8, in their efforts to gain the smallest hearing for "the far-seeing and wise policy," came back from their contact with the constituencies themselves as an even smaller group of 7. Of the 7 only two were returned by the free votes of Irish constitutencies, one of the remainder sat for a constituency in England. The other four owed their seats to the compulsory withdrawals in three cornered contests insisted upon by the Northern Bishops. And their newspaper organ which had remorselessly strangled free speech for others, was a few months later strangled itself in the Insolvency Court which, in Mr. Dillon's prophecy, was reserved for the farmers of Ireland.

The Parliamentary movement was dead. But it perished not because it was the Parliamentary movement of Parnell, but because it had long ceased to deserve the description.

III. A FAIR GOOD EVENING

I am far from desiring to finish on a despondent note. For the ear of a younger Ireland, it is the morning stars that are quiring, and the dawn has its roses even for older eyes. The Irish people have entered upon a rich heritage with the joy of a second youth. The land which might have been all, is nearly all, their own. So is the machinery of local self-government: so are the schools and the University, lost to them for ages of ignorance and shame. Nothing they have won can ever be taken from them; every-

thing that remains to be desired will be added unto them, whenever a leader arises in whom Thomas Davis' genius for inspiration is blended with Parnell's genius for command—even, indeed, without a leader of genius, by the mere operation of the central forces of human liberty, which must prevail if England's pretence of entering the Great War as the champion of "the small Nationalities" is not to be remembered to her infamy as an imposture—nay if civilization is not to return to chaos and dark night. In the meantime, for whatever has to be left half done, there are for some of us pretty adequate consolations in the sight of 300,000 Irish tenant-farmers once as hunttable as the foxes, established for ever as flourishing freeholders—of thousands of evicted tenants of the Campaign estates, who in any of the old wars against landlordism, would have disappeared into the workhouses and the emigrant ships to slake the vengeance of their victors, now triumphantly re-instated in their homes in pursuance of a national treaty to which the landlords and their Nationalist antagonists, the Liberal Party and the Tory Party, set their seals—and, perhaps, most grateful thought of all, fifty thousand labourers, once landless and starving for half the year in their unspeakable mud hovels, now snug in their cottage allotments, with the roses growing round their porticoes, and still richer roses in their children's cheeks. Not too bad a harvest for the life-work of one generation, even did we not know that, while the material face of Ireland is thus transfigured, an English Parliament, where O'Connell could not register one English vote for Ireland's freedom, and the Isaac Butt of the seventies not half a dozen, all British Parties in turn have been won over to the confession that the exact boundaries of Irish freedom alone remain to be delimited. After all a new generation, born to stand upright, with the pride of mastership in the land where their ancestors lay for many a

century at the feet of cruel slave-owners—a generation endowed beyond any that went before them with that inheritance of superb manhood and tender spirituality which makes their race one of the prime assets of an outworn world—may be quite safely trusted to complete the fabric of Irish liberty in a God of freedom's own appointed hour, unseduced and unterrified, with the undying purpose of a nation who, if they are subject to moods, in which they may seem as changeable as the mists upon their mountains, are in reality as true-fixed in their foundation-principles as the mountains underneath.

And now to all gentle readers a fair Good Evening ! For us two in our Mallow home no music would be more beguiling than the old monkish antiphon : “ *O beata solitudo ! O sola beatitudo !* : oh, blessed solitude ! oh, solitary blessedness ! ” were it not that in a world where never-ending struggle—even strife—is the inscrutably ordained condition of existence, to give oneself up to the lotus sweets of solitude would be a cowardly desertion of duty for any purpose except God's. That difficulty is solved for us by a state of things, in which, for good or ill, owing to a course of events on which there would be no use or pleasure in descanting here, every channel through which any counsel of mine could reach my countrymen has been closed. The fate of Ireland now rests in the keeping of men (and women) of whom—whatever may be said in reproof by “ the man of the world ” (who, somebody—I think Mr. Morley—remarks, is the worst enemy of the world)—no veteran in the hard fight for Ireland is likely to rebuke the unquenchable faith and daring and high purpose. Thus it has come to pass that we are free, without too much self-reproach, to luxuriate in our semi-solitude in the midst of the beautiful woodlands where one of us saw his first vision of the world, and of a people whose affection has never once faltered throughout

the vicissitudes of half-a-century of political choppings and changes, the while the air all around is musical with the hum of a youthful and yet ancient nation awakening to a new life of exuberant energy and hope. Our only grievance against a world still tossing in the fevers from which we have all but ceased to ache, is that all suffering human kind may not taste of the same temperate content as ourselves, while the years drift gently away towards the shadowland whence legion faces of friends who have gone before shine fondly out to us in welcome.

APPENDIX

[The following article, published in *United Ireland* of December 27th, 1884, is, I think, worth preserving as an historical document. It deals with the last phase of the Dublin Scandals of 1883-84, which turned the Coercionist Viceroy, Earl Spencer, into a Home Ruler, and struck a blow at Dublin Castle from which it has never recovered.]

GUILTY !

[From *United Ireland*, December 27th, 1884.]

To Dr. Baird, and not to the Crown officials, the Irish public owe the retribution which has at last overtaken the monster, French. If Dr. Baird had conveyed French's underground letter to his brother-in-law, Good, instead of placing it in the hands of the prison governor, French would never have been convicted. Good would have carried out the instructions sketched for him in the letter of the Detective-Director. The Castle people would have been gently but firmly approached. French's famous ultimatum: "I will and must get my terms, else the Government may look out," would have been hissed into the ear of officials whom he describes as "biting their nails," and suffering "pains in the side," at the thought of being rounded on by their imprisoned brother. "Sensible terms" would have been struck; the case would have been "worked up" as Mr. French suggests it easily might be, so "close to the wind" that "there need not even be a disagreement as in Cornwall's case," and Dr. Patton would have been instructed to prepare the English mind for that consummation by elaborating the biographical materials detailed in French's letter, depicting him as the

lamblike victim of a Nationalist conspiracy, and, in short, making him "a regular hero." Dr. Baird's officious scruples ruined all. Had he conveyed the letter to its proper destination, the great British public might be at this moment kissing the hem of Mr. French's garment as a hero and confessor, instead of shaving off his locks. Could Dr. Baird's indiscretion have been even concealed, we are entitled to assume from the guilty complaisance of the Government at every stage of this black business, that the intercepted letter would never have seen the light. It was because even prison walls have ears in modern Ireland, and because we were able to publish the contents of French's letter in this journal, while the Law Room at the Castle was making up its mind what to do with it, that the Castle determined to brazen out what it could no longer smother. But from the day the Crown braced themselves to produce French's letter they were manifestly bound to convict him. If a high official whose cynical scoundrelism was attested under his own hand, was suffered to go free, the only possible explanation would be that he had beaten his guilty confederates in high places to their knees by his threats. Nor would there have been any guarantee that, after securing his hush-money from the Castle he would not have used his freedom to prosecute his suggested negotiations with "Parnell and O'Brien" for the copyright of the revelations which were to "drive" his Castle chums "out of the country, and put some of them in the dock." There was clearly nothing for it but to silence him in an *oubliette* of Mountjoy, and there he is accordingly securely buried "till the clouds go by." His conviction does not abate one jot the hideous guilt which the history of his case will stamp for ever upon his Castle confederates. No sophistry can ever obliterate facts and dates which are burned into the public memory, and which prove beyond all doubt and cavil that, instead of honestly striving to deliver society from French's "vile and unnatural gang," the officers of "justice" in Ireland attempted to utilise the hideous confederacy for the destruction of an inconvenient newspaper. The facts stand out in letters of fire. On the 6th of September, 1883, French was suspended from duty. That was the upshot of an investigation held by Colonel Bruce, the Inspector-General. Up to that date the only paragraph in

which his name had been mentioned or hinted at in *United Ireland* was the following sentence from an article in our issue of the previous 25th of August :

“ If the House of Commons wants to make rules to stop such questions as Mr. Healy’s, it is open to it to devote its valuable time to the attempt, but it will not do so until the life and adventures, and what is called the ‘ private character ’ of various Crown *employés* in Ireland, from Corry Connellan to Detective-Director and County-Inspector James Ellis French, are fully laid bare to the universe.”

There is not a lawyer in the world who would advise that an action for libel could have been maintained upon that passage : Corry Connellan being at that time, for all that was proved to the contrary, an honoured as he was a pensioned public servant. We, therefore, incurred no legal liability until after we had learned French’s suspension as the result of inquiry by his own superior officers. But the moment we brought ourselves within the toils of the law of libel by announcing his suspension and its disgraceful cause, the zeal of Colonel Bruce and his prompters was diverted instantly from chastising French’s crimes to crushing us by means of French. On the 14th October our first libel appeared, French having been relieved from duty five weeks previously. On the 15th Colonel Bruce sent for him and informed him that he must bring his action against us under pain of dismissal ; and two days afterwards we received the writ. Colonel Bruce, therefore, knew the charge ; was *prima facie* satisfied of the truth of it, or he would never have suspended French, knew that in the ranks of the Constabulary itself evidences of his guilt were as thick as blackberries ; knew that these proofs were by the laws of the Constabulary force hopelessly out of reach of any private individual. With this knowledge, he not only abandoned his own investigation, but gave French every decent facility for frustrating ours ; allowed him publicly to swear, while under suspension, that his official position was undamaged ; refused inquiry into the efforts of his confederates in the detective force to baffle us ; allowed him to rusticate for six months on full pay on a plea of insanity which a visit from a physician of the rank of Dr. Robert

McDonnell would have exposed to scorn. It is all very well for Earl Spencer and his *asseclae* now to rub their hands in smug satisfaction that justice has been wreaked upon French. Justice has been wreaked in spite of them. To all time that black stain will smudge them. But for Dr. Baird's punctiliousness about unauthorised letters—but for the obtuseness of witnesses like Taylor, Johnston and Co. in not taking Mr. Trevelyan's hint to snap their fingers at us—*United Ireland* would ere now have disappeared from life amidst execrations, and Mr. French would have been feasted in the best English circles as "a regular hero." Mr. Trevelyan would publicly compliment him in Parliament on his recovery and boast the fulfilment of all the Trevelyanesque prophecies; Colonel Bruce would, after a decent interval, be retired from the Inspector-Generalship in favour of the lion of the hour; and Beastliness, crowned with laurels, would stalk society. The verdict of "Guilty," which makes French a thing loathed by such of his fellow-convicts as are mere thieves or cut-throats, is a verdict the shame of which will cling to French's masters.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 4444 05266 0966

1642414

Please: These cards **MUST** be returned
with this book to clear your record.
Penalty 10 cents per card

1

**BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY
CENTRAL SERVICE
GRAND ARMY PLAZA**

**Give your NEIGHBOR a chance to borrow
this book. Return it on or before DUE
DATE SHOWN ABOVE. The fee is 5¢ per
calendar day for each book kept overdue.**

